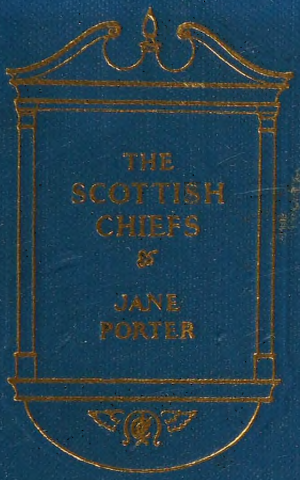
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OF
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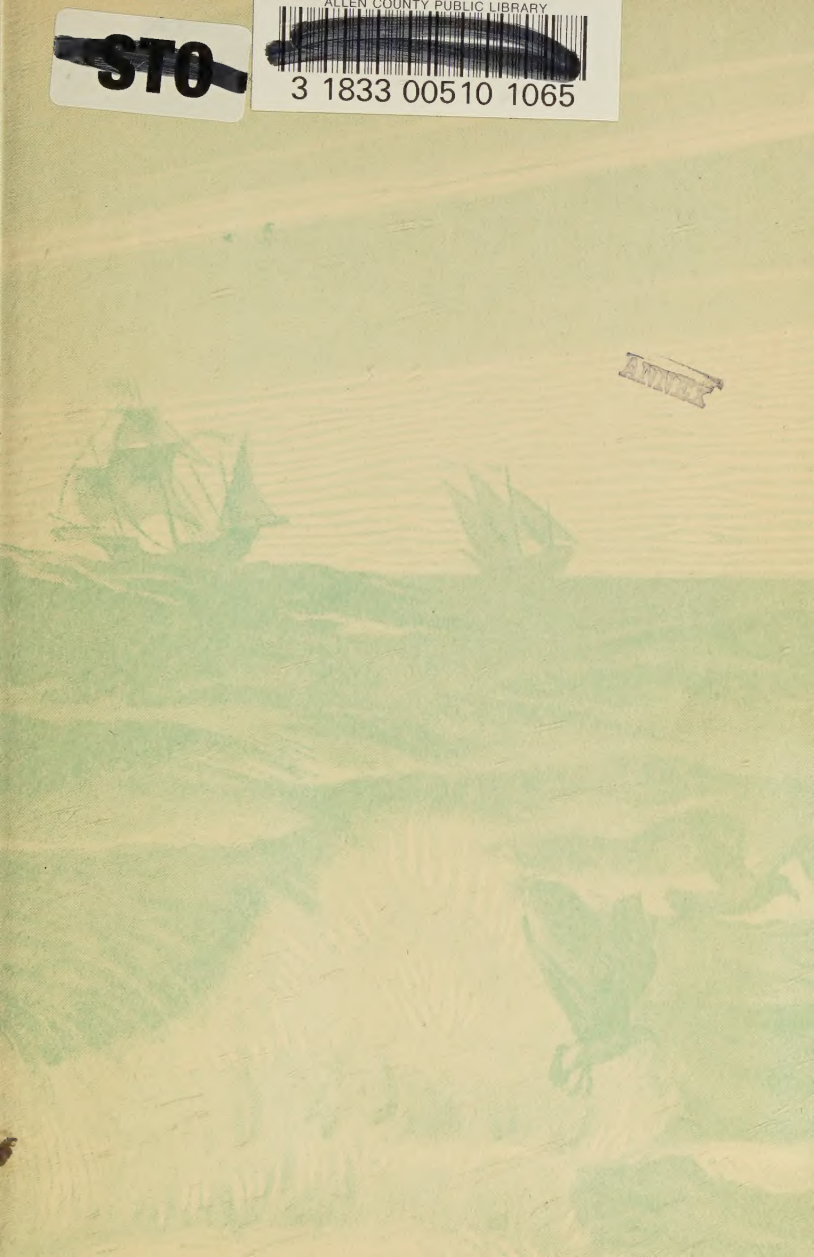

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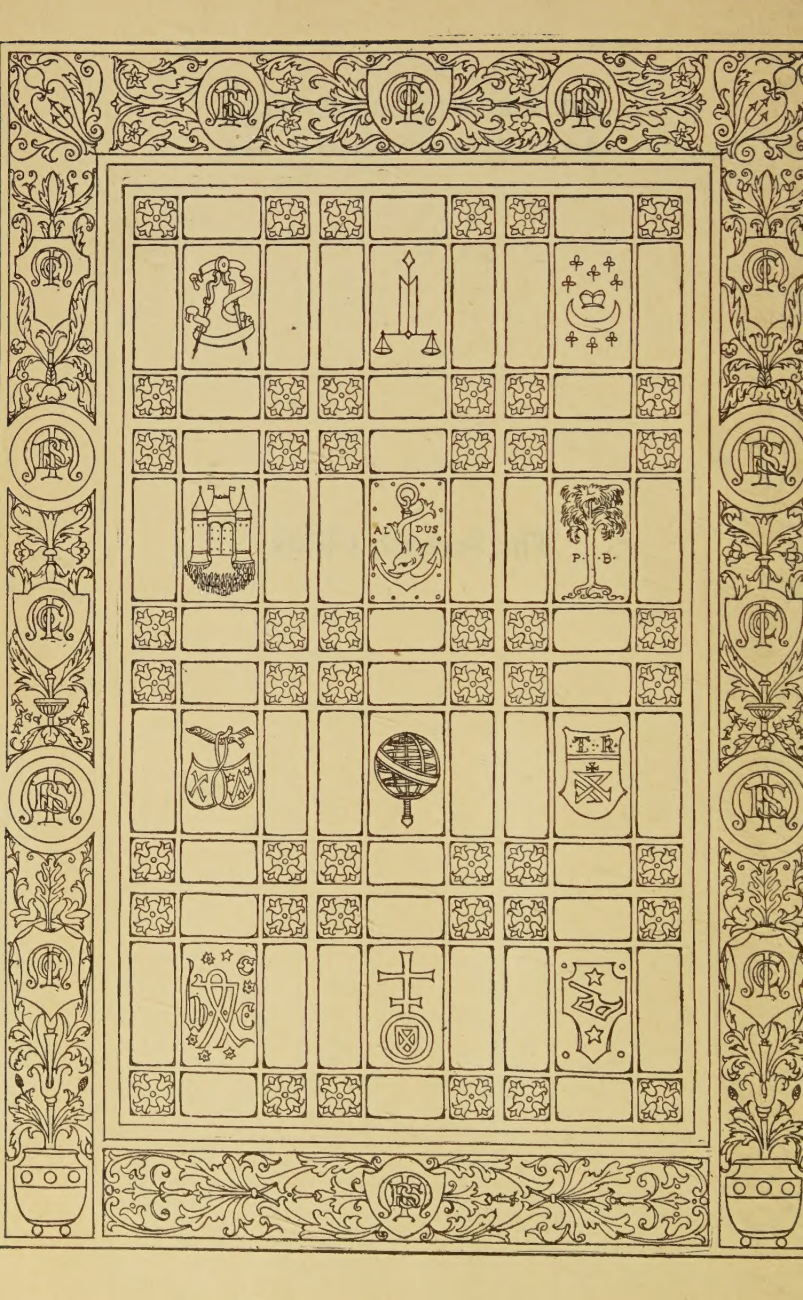
The Scottish Chiefs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The Scottish Chiefs

(ABRIDGED)

By JANE PORTER

There comes a voice that awakes my soul. It is the voice of years that are gone; they roll before me with their deeds.—Ossian.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ROBERT M. SMITH

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AT LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Jane Porter, who has achieved a memorable place in literary history as the author of "Thaddeus of Warsaw" and "The Scottish Chiefs," was the most distinguished member of a talented family. A younger sister, Anna Maria Porter (1780–1832), began at thirteen years of age a long series of romances, which, though now forgotten, enjoyed during her lifetime a popularity in England scarcely less than that of Jane. A younger brother, Sir Robert Ker Porter (1777–1842), was a traveller, diplomat, soldier, writer, and historical painter, received with honor wherever he went, whether in England, in Russia, or in the Orient. Her father, Major William Porter, an officer of the Dragoons, came from a line of noted ancestors, amongst them, Sir William Porter of the field of Agincourt, and Lord Chief Justice Sir Charles Porter, who transplanted his branch of the family to Ireland. Her mother, a native of Durham, traced her lineage from the old Anglo-Saxon barons of Blenkinsopp and Hilton.

Jane Porter, born at Durham in 1776, was the third of five children. On the father's death in 1779, the mother moved her family to Edinburgh to put the children under the tutelage of George Fulton, who kept there a celebrated day school. Here the children made an early acquaintance of Sir Walter Scott, then a gay-hearted youth, who loved to regale the young girls with stories of faery and witchcraft, and tales of the Scottish heath. Their historical sense needed little urging. Both girls were eager readers of Spenser's "Faery Queen," Sidney's "Arcadia," the hero stories of the Bible; and they spent many hours absorbing from black letter chronicles the exploits of English and Scottish warriors. Their neighbors too, stimulated this interest. Jane describes at length in one of her prefaces the great influence of "Luckie

Forbes," a humble woman steeped in Scotch lore, who never tired repeating the stories of Wallace and Bruce, of Percy and the Douglas. Moreover, there were living in the neighborhood descendants of famous Scotch families, the Çamerons, the Drummonds, the Lockharts—widows of fallen or executed nobles who had suffered disaster at Culloden in 1745 for adherence to the Stuart cause. From childhood the Porter girls by reading and association lived in a vivid historical past.

In 1803 Robert Porter's success in painting led the mother to move the family to London where the girls now entered a rich social environment. They became acquainted with the celebrities of the day,—the painters, West, Flaxman, and Northcote, and such writers as Hannah More, Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Barbauld, Southey, Coleridge, Lamb—and especially Thomas Campbell, who assisted Jane in her researches, and to whom she dedicated one of the editions of "The Scottish Chiefs."

Her unpublished diary reveals devotion at this time to Charles Kemble, "the best, the most fascinating, the most pious of men," and she confided to her sister "with much trembling of heart" that she would prefer him to all men living. But Kemble, though he thought Jane "a very pleasing girl," was already attracted by the French actress, Miss Theresa De Camp, whom he afterwards married; and it seems that when Jane learned the direction of Kemble's affection, she was instrumental in urging Miss De Camp to accept him.

The inordinate capacity of the sisters for hero-worship and the thrills they received from meeting these eminent persons of the day may be illustrated by the following excerpt, much abridged, from Jane's diary, describing the meeting with the hero of the hour, Sir Sidney Smith. Enthusiasm was indeed "the wine of her life."

December 11. This is a day which I particularly mark, because it is one of those rare days which occur in life, 'like angels' visits few and far between.' To give us a glimpse of the highest felicity of which the soul

is capable; a felicity so purely mental and so ecstatic that it makes the soul, whilst she is throbbing with bliss, feel her own grandeur in the delicious sublimity of her feelings. On this morning about twelve o'clock Sir Sidney Smith was announced to sit for his picture to my brother Robert. . . . We had now time to observe his person, his figure so far from being insignificant, is of a graceful height—about five feet nine—it is finely proportioned possessing the first essentials in dignity and air—a noble chest and shoulders. He wore a blue coat on which was embroidered a star, which indeed could not have been more aptly placed: 'Type of the glorious light that glowed within.' . . . His fine eyes were suffused with the sweetest lustre as he spoke. In short, there was so much enchantment about this brave man, that he strongly brought to Maria and myself at the same instant, an embodied representation of the gallant Scipio (marvellous unanimity!).

In this environment "surrounded," as she says, "by living characters whose corresponding military frame, seemed to hold me examples I need only copy," she wrote her first romance, "Thaddeus of Warsaw," the story of a Polish exile. It appeared in 1803 with a dedication to Sidney Smith; its success was immediate; it passed through nine editions by 1810, and was translated into foreign languages. Miss Porter received a letter of commendation from Kosciusko, and a relative of his presented her with a gold ring containing the General's portrait. The King of Wurtemburg, in recognition of her literary power, made her a Lady of the Chapter of Saint Joachim. Later editions of this work at frequent intervals from 1831 to 1870 attest its continued popularity through the century, and even today it sometimes finds a place in series of standard novels.

The family about this time moved from London to "a cottage in the vale," first at Thames Ditton and then at Esher in Surrey not far from Hampton Court. Under very different circumstances, Miss Porter began in 1809 her most famous novel, "The Scottish Chiefs." "Our revered parent," she says, "wisely took us from a world that might have presented too many charms for young and ardent spirits and . . . in the quiet seclusion . . . recollection of the past could not but be our frequent amuse-

ment." Here "haunted by the ever-inspiring images of William Wallace and his brother heroes and under the impulse of a votive sorrow, I conceived the idea of writing 'The Scottish Chiefs.'" Composed within a year, this first historical romance appeared in five volumes in 1810, four years before Scott's "Waverley," met with an immense success in England, particularly in Scotland, and presently achieved an extensive European fame. The author notes with natural pride the receipt of "letters of liberal criticism from persons of the highest names and rank in literature, from Vienna, Berlin, Wurtemburg, Petersburg, and Moscow and even far distant India." Part of this enthusiasm is undoubtedly accounted for by the universal passion for romance and sentiment and part by the political condition of Europe during the first twenty years of the new century, when the people were groaning under the re-established despotisms following the French Revolution. Miss Porter voiced and shared the same time-spirit that made Byron famous as an apostle of freedom—a spirit that was to break out after the Napoleonic regime in the new revolutions of the thirties and forties. Interesting evidence of the book's power is its reception in France. Napoleon immediately suppressed the French translation, since he did not wish the imaginations of his subject peoples stirred by examples of heroes sacrificing their lives for the cause of liberty. This proscription, however, only served to increase Miss Porter's pride: "That an English woman's narrative of a Scottish patriot struggling for the liberty of his country and dying in its cause, should alarm the vigilance of the tyrant who, at that time, had subjected all countries but her own, is a circumstance in which even the most modest mind might be allowed to see some honor—and the biographer of William Wallace trusts that such pride may not be blamed in her." A further illustration of her moral earnestness, her steadfast point of view, as well as her ability to discriminate between heroes and tyrants, is contained in

the following passage from the postscript of the third edition:

> We know that with conquerors, who usually fight for power rather than justice, the use of certain sentiments springs more from expediency than principle. Real principle is proved in the results—a true patriot establishes the liberty of his country, without infringing on the rights of others; a pretender first founds a despotic empire over his own countrymen and then leads them to put similar chains on their neighbours. To draw the line between such characters, to place high chivalric loyalty and the spirit of patriotic freedom on just principles whether in the breast of a prince or peasant, the writer of this tale has studied the pages of many a history.

In America, "The Scottish Chiefs" speedily became a fireside favorite of the people and eventually took the place which it now holds, and will continue to hold, as a standard novel of adventure and heroism especially appealing to boys and girls. As late as the October of 1844 when Miss Porter was in her sixty-eighth year, the publishers and authors of New York sent her "a handsome armchair elegantly carved in rosewood and covered with rich crimson velvet" with a memorial letter of "high and respectful admiration" as one whose name "has spread over the length and breadth of our land" and "whose works may be found gracing alike the abodes of the wealthy and the humble abodes of the poor." It might have been more to the point had they made sure that Miss Porter received liberal financial rewards from the sales of her novels in America; for, from her mother's death in 1832 followed by her sister's a year later, she was frequently in indigent circumstances partly relieved from time to time by the generosity of her brother, Sir Robert.

The remaining efforts of her pen are now forgotten. In 1815 appeared "The Pastor's Fireside," and in 1824, at the suggestion of George IV, "Duke Christian of Lunenburg." In 1831 she awakened a good deal of curiosity and some censure for "Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative of His Shipwreck and Consequent Discovery of Seven Islands in the Caribbean Sea,"—a Robinson Crusoe

adventure purporting to be a real diary, but written probably by her with the aid, perhaps, of an elder brother, William. When pressed about its authenticity, she replied, "Sir Walter Scott had his great secret; I must be allowed to keep my little one."

Meanwhile, during the years 1819 to 1822, she tried her hand at drama. But "Switzerland," acted at Drury Lane by Kean and Kemble, was speedily withdrawn and "Owen, Prince of Powys," was "a sad failure." Miss Mitford notes that this failure in drama was a severe blow to Miss Porter for her success as a novelist had given her a vanity that now proved vulnerable.

From 1832 she resided chiefly in London moving with pleasure among the artistic and literary celebrities of the day and generously encouraging literary aspirants; or, as Maginn less graciously described her, "generally contriving to be seen patronising some sucking lion or lioness." There are numerous testimonials to her social charm and also to her unusual personal beauty.

N. P. Willis declared that her conversation was "more delightful to remember than any person's I ever knew." She was the only literary lady Miss Mitford had seen "who was not fit for a scarecrow"; moreover the charming portrait of her as a canoness by Harlow (National Portrait Gallery) also bears out the general opinion. In contrast to her sister who was called "L'Allegro," Jane was "Il Penseroso." She possessed a serious and fervently religious temperament. The Christian principles instilled from childhood remained unchanged. She did not develop with the thought of the time; the restlessness and struggle of the thirties, so vivid in the pages of Carlyle and Newman, left her tranquil and unmoved; and thus she remained until her death at Bristol in 1850 at the ripe age of seventy-five—a spinster with a touch of "old-world" and sentimental eloquence in her manner, but also an accomplished woman who, had reached the zenith of her beauty and fame, who had kept much "worshipful

company" in her time, and who could still rightfully maintain:

> I *first* adventured. Follow me who list
> And be the *second* Scottish novelist.

We shall understand the nature of Jane Porter's contribution to historical fiction if we realize first her main purpose in writing, for she conceived "The Scottish Chiefs" in the same lofty spirit that dominated her life. She wrote always from one motive: "to inspire virtue into the hearts of her youthful readers." She chose heroic fiction because she believed that "what ballads were in the sixteenth century, romances are now, the constant companions of the people's leisure hours; and by their precepts and teaching the minds of our youth are biassed to vice or formed to virtue." Both she and her sister regarded their writing "not as a pastime for ourselves, or a mere amusement for others, but as the use to be made of an entrusted talent, given us for a purpose . . . for every word we set down in our pages we believed we must be accountable to heaven and to our country."

This high conception of authorship gives to Miss Porter's characterization, as well as to her style, a moral fervor and a sentimentality more in keeping with the tastes of her own time than of ours, for in that day exaggeration of emotion and enthusiasm were considered good tone and good taste. Her harshest critics, Maginn and Saintsbury, are quite explicit in this regard. The former characterizes her " 'Wallace Wight' as a sort of sentimental dandy who . . . faints upon occasion, is revived by lavender water and throughout the book is tenderly in love." This criticism is an early indication of the difficulties confronting the type of fiction Miss Porter originated. The vogue of the Gothic romance begun by Horace Walpole's "Castle of Otranto" in 1764, was already established, as was also the sentimental romance. Miss Porter was the first to combine the characteristics of

both these types with as accurate a portrayal of history as possible. Her main purpose was not to write a fanciful and thrilling story of love and adventure. She wished to recreate with fidelity the heroic past so that youthful readers might emulate its virtues. Accordingly with a good deal of the spirit of the historian, she made an exhaustive search for everything pertaining to the life and times of Wallace, and she put into her plot surprisingly little that is untrue to fact. Nevertheless it must be acknowledged that her hero remains a stilted and preposterous figure as little like the historical Wallace as well could be. She succeeded, to be sure, in depicting Wallace's gallant bearing, his dauntless courage and resolution to do or die, as well as his private virtues, his constancy in friendship and love, but she also endowed him with the tears and gushing sentimentality of her own age and gave him a manner much too soft and gentle. It is unlikely that William Wallace and Marion ever talked like this:

"Sweetest Marion, what merit has thy Wallace in mere benevolence? Contracted is now my sphere of duty and easily fulfilled; it is only to befriend the oppressed to the utmost of my power! And while tyranny leaves me that privilege I shall not consider myself quite a slave. Were I useless to my fellow-creatures, I should be miserable; for in blessing them, I bless myself. I bless thee, my Marion; and the grateful countenance of these poor people, add beauty even to thine! Art thou not loveliest in my eyes this moment, thou angel of peace and love! Dost thou not praise thy husband for what is common with thee?" She smiled, and a happy tear glittered in her eye. "To be lovely to thee, Wallace, is all my joy; and to see thee so worthy of all my love fills me indeed with an angel's happiness."

In endeavoring thus to serve the double purpose of history and romance, the historical novel opens itself to the complaints of historians on the one side who seek what is true in fact, and lovers of romance on the other, impatient of fact, who find pleasure in the fanciful. But after one has given due weight to these considerations, he should remember that history is not a bare chronicle of facts, and that the historians who have really succeeded

in projecting us into the past are writers like Froissart, Gibbon and Macaulay, who have mastered the art of picturesque and moving narrative. Moreover, we should realize that the great literary genius makes history for us in spite of the historians. Try as we may we shall never cease to think of Richard III or Henry V as Shakespeare drew them, or in lesser measure of Louis XI and Richard I as Scott portrayed them. Such power of character drawing Miss Porter did not possess.

We need not accept, however, on this account, Saintsbury's sweeping condemnation of Miss Porter's work as "almost utter, though virtuous and well-intentioned, rubbish." There are plenty of readers of the last generation who could be found to testify with Kate Douglas Wiggin that "after forty years the book casts the same spell, enchanting, pathetic, romantic, breathless in suspense, thrilling in its rapidity of movement and its astounding wealth of incidents." If Miss Porter lacked skill in characterization, she did give her readers a sense of the past and provide what is always in demand by the reading public, a good story of heroism and adventure. Here in a background of history and nature are the ever-appealing devices of the Gothic story: haunted castles with secret doors, underground passages, movable pillars, flagstones that lift and disclose friar's cells; knights and countesses, wandering minstrels, and women lovers disguised as pages; and in the management of the plot, surprise, suspense, fights and bloodshed, thrilling escapes, and the alluring improbabilities of melodrama. These were also the materials of her illustrious successor, Sir Walter Scott. In one respect she excels this novelist who followed her example and eclipsed her achievement. She did not, like Scott, in "Ivanhoe" for example, obstruct her story, particularly at the beginning, with prolonged antiquarian and historical disquisitions; she began at once with action. Before the first four chapters are concluded, Wallace has been drawn from his retreat to receive the

mysterious box, has killed the rapacious English governor Heselrigge, has fled to the mountains for refuge—only to learn of the ruthless murder of his beloved Marion. It is unlikely that the average boy or girl will fail to respond to the appeal of such a rapidly moving story. It is more likely that "The Scottish Chiefs" will remain a historical romance to be enjoyed by each succeeding generation.

Robert M. Smith.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION

PUBLISHED IN 1809

To paint the portrait of one of the most complete heroes that ever filled the page of history, may be a bold, though I hope not a vain, design. The contemplation of virtue is an improving, as well as a delightful employment; and however inadequate this picture may be to represent its original—William Wallace of Scotland,—yet, that it is a copy of such excellence, will be merit in the eyes of those who so love virtue, as to venerate its shade.

I have spared no pains in consulting almost every writing extant, which treats of the sister kingdoms during the period of my narrative. It would be tedious to swell this page with a list of these authorities; but all who are intimate with our old British historians must perceive, on reading the *Scottish Chiefs*, that in the sketch which history would have laid down for the biography of my principal hero, I have made no addition, excepting where, time having made some erasure, a stroke was necessary to fill the space, and unite the outline. Tradition has been a great assistance to me in this respect. And for much valuable information on the subject, I am indebted to the *Bard of Hope*, my friend Mr. Thomas Campbell; he who has so nobly mingled the poet's bays with the laurels of his clan.

While tracing the characters of my personages in the Scottish annals, it was with infinite pleasure I recognised those virtues in the fathers which had attached me to their posterity. Delighted with this most dear proof of kindred, I have fondly lingered over my work; re-enjoying, in its visionary scenes, hours fled to heaven. I have again discoursed, and mingled my soul, with friends whose nobility

of spirit honoured the illustrious stems from which they sprung: but, like the blossomed bough torn from its branch, they are gone, and spread fragrance in my path no more.

It is now too common to contemn as nonsense, even an honest pride in ancestry. But where is the Englishman who is not proud of being the countryman of Nelson? Where the British sailor that does not thirst to emulate his fame? Where the worthy citizen who does not respect himself in the honourable memories of William Walworth and Sir Thomas Gresham?

If this sentiment be right, respect for noble progenitors cannot be wrong; for it proceeds from the same source,—the principle of kindred, of inheritance, and of virtue. Let the race of Douglas, or the brave line of the Percy, bear witness whether the name they hold be not as a mirror to show them what they ought to be, and to kindle in their hearts the flame which burnt in their fathers. Happy is it for this realm that the destiny which now unites the once contending arms of those brave families, has also consolidated their rival nations into one, and by planting the heir of Plantagenet and of Bruce upon one throne, hath redeemed the peace of Britain, and fixed it on lasting foundations.

From the nature of my story, more agents have been used in its conduct than I should have adopted had it been a work of mere imagination. But very few persons wholly imaginary have been introduced; and, wishing to keep as near historical truth as could be consistent with my plan, no intentional injustice has been committed against the characters of the individuals who were real actors with the chief hero of the tale. The melancholy circumstance which first excited him to draw his sword for Scotland though it may be thought too much like the creation of modern romance, is recorded as a fact in the old poem of Blind Harrie. Other private events have been interwoven with the public subjects of these volumes, that

the monotony of a continued series of warlike achievements might in some measure be lessened. Some notes are added to confirm the historical incidents; but finding that were they all marked, such a plan would swell each volume beyond its proper size, in one word I assure the reader that I seldom lead him to any spot in Scotland whither some written or oral testimony respecting my hero had not previously conducted myself. In the same spirit, being careful to keep to the line of chronology, I have not strayed from it in any instance until my chief personages return from France; and then, my history being intended to be within the bounds of modern romance, rather than measured by the folios of Scudery, I found myself obliged to take some liberties with time and circumstance: for both of which offences, and particularly for the management of my catastrophe, I hope the historical, if he be also a *gentle* reader, will find no difficulty in forgiving me.

Long Ditton, Dec., 1809. J. P.

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS

CHAPTER I

SCOTLAND

Bright was the summer of 1296. The war which had desolated Scotland was then at an end. Ambition seemed satiated; and the vanquished, after having passed under the yoke of their enemy, concluded they might wear their chains in peace. Such were the hopes of those Scottish noblemen who, early in the preceding spring, had signed the bond of submission to a ruthless conqueror, purchasing life at the price of all that makes life estimable,—liberty and honour.

Prior to this act of vassalage, Edward I. king of England had entered Scotland at the head of an immense army. He seized Berwick by stratagem; laid the country in ashes; and, on the field of Dunbar, forced the Scottish king and his nobles to acknowledge him their liege lord.

But while the courts of Edward, or of his representatives, were crowded by the humbled Scots, the spirit of one brave man remained unsubdued. Disgusted alike at the facility with which the sovereign of a warlike nation could resign his people and his crown into the hands of a treacherous invader, and at the pusillanimity of the nobles who had ratified the sacrifice, William Wallace retired to the glen of Ellerslie. Withdrawn from the world, he hoped to avoid the sight of oppressions he could not redress, and the endurance of injuries beyond his power to avenge.

Thus checked at the opening of life in the career of glory that was his passion,—secluded in the bloom of

manhood from the social haunts of men,—he repressed the eager aspiration of his mind, and strove to acquire that resignation to inevitable evils which alone could reconcile him to forego the promises of his youth; and enable him to view with patience a humiliation of Scotland, which blighted her honour, menaced her existence, and consigned her sons to degradation or obscurity. The latter was the choice of Wallace. Too noble to bend his spirit to the usurper, too honest to affect submission, he resigned himself to the only way left of maintaining the independence of a true Scot; and giving up the world at once, all the ambitions of youth became extinguished in his breast, since nothing was preserved in his country to sanctify their fires. Scotland seemed proud of her chains. Not to share in such debasement, appeared all that was now in his power; and within the shades of Ellerslie he found a retreat and a home, whose sweets beguiling him of every care, made him sometimes forget the wrongs of his country in the tranquil enjoyments of wedded love.

During the happy months of the preceding autumn, while Scotland was yet free, and the path of honourable distinction still open before her young nobility, Wallace married Marion Braidfoot, the beautiful heiress of Lammington. Nearly of the same age, and brought up from childhood together, reciprocal affection had grown with their growth; and sympathy of taste and virtues, and mutual tenderness, made them so entirely one, that when at the age of twenty-two the enraptured lover was allowed to pledge that faith publicly at the altar, which he had so often vowed in secret to his Marion, he clasped her to his heart, and softly whispered,—'Dearer than life! part of my being! blessed is this union, that mingles thy soul with mine, now, and for ever!'

Edward's invasion of Scotland broke in upon their innocent joys. Wallace threw aside the wedding garment for the cuirass and the sword. But he was not permitted long to use either:—Scotland submitted to her enemies; and he

had no alternative but to bow to her oppressors, or to become an exile from man, amid the deep glens of his country.

The tower of Ellerslie was henceforth the lonely abode of himself and his bride. The neighbouring nobles avoided him, because the principles he declared were a tacit reproach on their proceedings; and in the course of a short time, as he forbore to seek them, they even forgot that he was in existence. Indeed, all occasions of mixing with society he now rejected. The hunting-spear with which he had delighted to follow the flying roebuck from glade to glade, the arrows with which he used to bring down the heavy ptarmigan or the towering eagle, all were laid aside. Scottish liberty was no more; and Wallace would have blushed to have shown himself to the freeborn deer of his native hills, in communion of sports with the spoilers of his country. Had he pursued his once favourite exercises, he must have mingled with the English, now garrisoned in every town, and who passed their hours of leisure in the chase.

Being resigned to bury his youth,—since its strength could no longer be serviceable to his country,—books, his harp, and the sweet converse of his tender Marion, became the occupations of his days. Ellerslie was his hermitage; and there, closed from the world, with an angel his companion, he might have forgotten Edward was lord of Scotland, had not that which was without his little paradise made a way to its gates, and showed him the slavery of the nobles and the wretchedness of the people. In these cases his generous hand gave succour, where it could not bring redress. Those whom the lawless plunderer had driven from their houses or stripped of their covering, found shelter, clothing, and food at the house of Sir William Wallace.

Several months of this blissful and uninterrupted solitude had elapsed, when Lady Wallace saw a chieftain at her gate. He inquired for its master—requested a private

conference—and retired with him into a remote room. They remained together for an hour. Wallace then came forth, and ordering his horse, with four followers, to be in readiness, said he meant to accompany his guest to Douglas castle. When he embraced his wife at parting, he told her that as Douglas was only a few miles distant, he should be at home again before the moon rose.

She passed the tedious hours of his absence with tranquillity, till the appointed signal of his return appeared from behind the summits of the opposite mountains. So bright were its beams, that Marion did not need any other light to show her the stealing sands of her hour-glass, as they numbered the prolonged hours of her husband's stay. She dismissed her servants to their rest; all excepting Halbert, the grey-haired harper of Wallace; and he, like herself, was too unaccustomed to the absence of his master to find sleep visit his eyes while Ellerslie was bereft of its joy and its guard.

As the night advanced, Lady Wallace sat in the window of her bed-chamber, which looked towards the west. She watched the winding pathway that led from Lanark down the opposite heights, eager to catch a glimpse of the waving plumes of her husband when he should emerge from behind the hill, and pass under the thicket which overhung the road. Overcome with watching, expectation, and disappointment, unable to say whence arose her fears, she sat down again to look; but her eyes were blinded with tears, and in a voice interrupted by sighs she exclaimed, 'Not yet, not yet!—Ah, my Wallace, what evil hath betided thee?'

Trembling with a nameless terror, she knew not what to dread. She believed that all hostile recontres had ceased, when Scotland no longer contended with Edward. The nobles, without remonstrance, had surrendered their castles into the hands of the usurper; and the peasantry, following the examples of their lords, had allowed their homes to be ravaged without lifting an arm in their defence. Opposition being over, nothing could then threaten her

husband from the enemy; and was not the person who had taken him from Ellerslie, a friend?

Before Wallace's departure, he had spoken to Marion alone; he told her that the stranger was Sir John Monteith, the youngest son of the brave Walter Lord Monteith,[1] who had been treacherously put to death by the English in the early part of the foregoing year. This young man was bequeathed by his dying father to the particular charge of his friend William Lord Douglas, at the time governor of Berwick. After the fall of that place and the captivity of its defender, Sir John Monteith had retired to Douglas castle, in the vicinity of Lanark, and was now the sole master of that princely residence; James Douglas, the only son of its veteran lord, being still at Paris, whither he had been despatched, before the defeat at Dunbar, to negotiate a league between the French monarch and the then King of Scots.

Informed of the privacy in which Wallace wished to live, Monteith had never ventured to disturb it until this day; but knowing the steady honour of his old school-companion, he came to entreat him, by the respect he entertained for the brave Douglas, and by his love for his country, that he would not refuse to accompany him to the brave exile's castle.

'I have a secret to disclose to you,' said he, 'which cannot be divulged on any other spot.'

Unwilling to deny so small a favour, Wallace, as has been said before, consented; and accordingly was conducted by Monteith towards Douglas.

While descending the heights which led to the castle, Monteith kept a profound silence; and when crossing the

[1] Walter Stewart, the father of Sir John Monteith, assumed the name and earldom of Monteith in right of his wife, the daughter and heiress of the preceding earl. When his wife died, he married an Englishwoman of rank, who finding him ardently attached to the liberties of his country, cut him off by poison, and was rewarded by the enemies of Scotland for this murder with the hand of a British nobleman.—(1809.)

drawbridge towards it, he put his finger to his lips, in token to the servants for equal caution. This was explained as they entered the gate, and looked around. It was guarded by English soldiers. Wallace would have drawn back; but Monteith laid his hand on his arm, and whispered, 'For your country!' At these words, a spell to the ear of Wallace, he proceeded; and his attendants followed into the court-yard.

The sun was just setting as Monteith led his friend into the absent earl's room. Its glowing reflection on the distant hills reminded Wallace of the stretch he had to retread to reach his home before midnight; and thinking of his anxious Marion, he awaited with impatience the development of the object of his journey.

Monteith closed the door, looked fearfully around for some time; then, trembling at every step, approached Wallace. When drawn quite near, in a low voice he said, 'You must swear upon the cross that you will keep inviolate the secret I am going to reveal.'

Wallace put aside the hilt of the sword, which Monteith presented to receive his oath:—'No,' said he, with a smile; 'in these times I will not bind my conscience, on subjects I do not know. If you dare trust the word of a Scotsman and a friend, speak out; and if the matter be honest, my honour is your pledge.'

'You will not swear?'

'No.'

'Then I must not trust you.'

'Then our business is at an end.' returned Wallace, rising, 'and I may return home.'

'Stop!' cried Monteith. 'Forgive me, my old companion, that I have dared to hesitate: These are, indeed, times of such treason to honour, that I do not wonder you should be careful how you swear. But the nature of the confidence reposed in me, will, I hope, convince you that I ought not to share it rashly. Of any one but you, whose truth stands unsullied amidst the faithlessness of the best,

I would exact oaths on oaths; but your word is given, and on that I rely. Await me here.'

Monteith unlocked a door which had been concealed by the tapestry, and after a short absence re-entered with a small iron box. He set it on the table near his friend, then went to the great door, which he had before so carefully closed, tried that the bolts were secure, and returned, with a still more pallid countenance, towards the table. Wallace, surprised at so much precaution, and at the extreme apprehension visible in these actions, awaited with wonder the promised explanation. Monteith sat down with his hand on the box, and fixing his eyes on it, began:—

'I am going to mention a name, which you may hear with patience, since its power is no more. The successful rival of Bruce, and the enemy of your family, is now a prisoner in the Tower of London.'

'Baliol?'

'Yes,' answered Monteith; 'and his present sufferings will, perhaps, avenge to you his vindictive resentment of the injury he received from Sir Ronald Crawford.'

'My grandfather never injured him, nor any man!' interrupted Wallace: 'Sir Ronald Crawford was as incapable of injustice, as of flattering the minions of his country's enemy. But Baliol is fallen, and I forgive him.'

'Did you witness his degradation,' returned Monteith, 'you would even pity him.'

'I always pity the wicked,' continued Wallace: 'and as you seem ignorant of the cause of his enmity against Sir Ronald and myself, in justice to the character of that most venerable of men I will explain it. I first saw Baliol four years ago, when I accompanied my grandfather to witness the arbitration of the King of England between the two contending claimants for the Scottish crown. Sir Ronald come on the part of Bruce. I was deemed too young to have a voice in the council; but I was old enough to understand what was passing there, and to perceive, in the crouching demeanour with which Baliol received the

crown, that it was the price for which he sold his country. However, as Scotland acknowledged him sovereign, and as Bruce submitted, my grandfather silently acquiesced. But Baliol did not forget former opposition. His behaviour to Sir Ronald and myself at the beginning of this year, when, according to the privilege of our birth, we appeared in the field against the public enemy, fully demonstrated what was the *injury* Baliol complains of, and how unjustly he drove us from the standard of Scotland. "None," said he, "shall serve under me, who presume to declare themselves the friends of Bruce," Poor weak man! The purchased vassal of England; yet so vain of his ideal throne, he hated all who had opposed his elevation, even while his own treachery sapped its foundation! Edward having made use of him, all these sacrifices of honour and of conscience are insufficient to retain his favour; and Baliol is removed from his kingdom to an English prison! Can I feel anything so honouring as indignation against a wretch so abject? No! I do indeed pity him. And now that I have cleared my grandfather's name of such calumny, I am ready to hear you further.'

Monteith, after remarking on the well-known honour of Sir Ronald Crawford, resumed.

'During the massacre at the capture of Berwick, Lord Douglas, wounded, and nearly insensible, was taken by a trusty band of Scots out of the citadel and town. I followed him to Dunbar, and witnessed with him that day's dreadful conflict, which completed the triumph of the English. When the few nobles who survived the battle dispersed, Douglas took the road to Forfar, hoping to meet King Baliol there, and to concert with him new plans of resistance. When we arrived, we found his Majesty in close conversation with the Earl of Athol, who had persuaded him the disaster at Dunbar was decisive, and that if he wished to save his life, he must immediately go to the King of England, then at Montrose, and surrender himself to his mercy.

'Douglas tried to alter Baliol's resolution, but without effect. The King could not return any reasonable answers to the arguments which were offered to induce him to remain, but continued to repeat, with groans and tears, "It is my fate." Athol sat knitting his black brows during this conversation; and, at last throwing out some sullen remarks to Lord Douglas, on exhorting the King to defy his liege lord, he abruptly left the room.

'As soon as he was gone, Baliol rose from his seat with a very anxious countenance, and taking my patron into an adjoining room, they continued there a few minutes, and then re-entered. Douglas brought with him this iron box. "Monteith," said he, "I confide this to your care." Putting the box under my arm, and concealing it with my cloak—"Carry it," continued he, "directly to my castle in Lanarkshire. I will rejoin you there, in four-and-twenty hours after your arrival. Meanwhile, by your affection for me and fidelity to your king, breathe not a word of what has passed."

' "Look on that, and be faithful!" said Baliol, putting this ruby ring on my finger. I withdrew, with the haste his look dictated; and as I crossed the outward hall, was met by Athol. He eyed me sternly, and inquired whither I was going. I replied, " To Douglas, to prepare for the coming of its lord." The hall was full of armed men in Athol's colours. Not one of the remnant who had followed my patron from the bloody field of Dunbar was visible. Athol looked round on his myrmidons: "Here," cried he, "see that you speed this fellow on his journey. We shall provide lodgings for his master." I foresaw danger to Lord Douglas, but I durst not attempt to warn him of it; and to secure my charge, which a return to the room might have hazarded, I hastened into the court-yard; and being permitted to mount my horse, set off at full speed.

'On arriving at this place, I remembered that secret closet, and carefully deposited the box within it. A week passed without any tidings of Lord Douglas. At last a

pilgrim appeared at the gate, and requested to see me alone; fearing nothing from a man in so sacred a habit, I admitted him. Presenting me with a packet which had been entrusted to him by Lord Douglas, he told me my patron had been forcibly carried on board a vessel at Montrose, to be conveyed with the unhappy Baliol to the Tower of London. Douglas, on this outrage, sent to the monastery at Aberbrothick, and under the pretence of making a religious confession before he sailed, begged a visit from the subprior. "I am that prior," continued the pilgrim; "and having been born on the Douglas lands, he well knew the claim he had to my fidelity. He gave me this packet, and conjured me to lose no time in conveying it to you. The task was difficult: and, as in these calamitous seasons we hardly know whom to trust, I determined to execute it myself."

'I inquired whether Lord Douglas had actually sailed. "Yes," replied the father; "I stood on the beach till the ship disappeared." '

A half-stifled groan burst from the indignant breast of Wallace. It interrupted Monteith for an instant, but without noticing it, he proceeded.

'Not only the brave Douglas was then wrested from his country, with our King, but also that holy pillar of Jacob,[1] which prophets have declared to be the palladium of Scotland!'

'What!' inquired Wallace, with a yet darker frown, 'has Baliol robbed Scotland of that trophy of one of her best

[1] The tradition respecting this stone is as follows:—Hiber, or Iber, the Phœnician, who came from the Holy Land, to inhabit the coast of Spain, brought this sacred relic along with him. From Spain he transplanted it with the colony he sent to people the South of Ireland; and from Ireland it was brought into Scotland by the great Fergus, the son of Ferchard. He placed it in Argyleshie; but MacAlpine removed it to Scone, and fixed it in the royal chair in which all the succeeding kings of Scotland were inaugurated. Edward I. of England caused it to be carried to Westminster Abbey, where it now stands. The tradition is, that empire abides where it stays.—(1809.)

kings? Is the sacred gift of Fergus to be made the spoil of a coward?'

'Baliol is not the robber,' rejoined Monteith: 'the hallowed pillar was taken from Scone by the command of the King of England, and with the sackings of Iona, was carried on board the same vessel with the betrayed Douglas. The archives of the kingdom have also been torn from their sanctuary, and were thrown by Edward's own hands into the fire.'

'Tyrant!' murmured Wallace, 'thou mayst fill the cup too full!'

'His depredations,' continued Monteith, 'the good monk told me, have been wide as destructive. He has not left a parchment, either of public records or of private annals, in any of the monasteries or castles around Montrose; all have been searched and plundered. And, besides, the faithless Earl of March and Lord Soulis are such parricides of their country, as to have performed the like robberies, in his name, from the eastern shores of the Highlands to the farthest of the Western Isles.

'Do the traitors think,' cried Wallace, 'that by robbing Scotland of her annals and of that stone they really deprive her of her palladium? Scotland's history is in the memories of her sons; her palladium is in their hearts; and Edward may one day find that she remembers the victory of Largs, and needs not talismans to give her freedom.'

'Alas! not in our time!' answered Monteith. 'The spear is at our breasts, and we must submit. You see this castle is full of Edward's soldiers. Every house is a garrison for England,— but more of this by and by; I have yet to tell you the contents of the packet which the monk brought. It contained two others. One directed to Sir James Douglas at Paris, and the other to me. I read as follows:—

' "Athol has persuaded Baliol to his ruin, and betrayed me into the hands of Edward. I shall see Scotland no more. Send the enclosed to my son at Paris; it will inform

him what is the last wish of William Douglas for his country. The iron box I confided to you guard as your life, until you can deposit it with my son. But should he remain abroad, and you ever be in extremity, commit the box in strict charge to the worthiest Scot you know; and tell him *that it will be at the peril of his soul, who dares to open it, till Scotland be again free!* When that hour comes, then let the man by whose valour God restores her rights, receive the box as *his own;* for by him only is it to be opened. DOUGLAS." '

Monteith finished reading the letter, and remained silent. Wallace, who had listened to it with increasing indignation against the enemies of Scotland, spoke first:— 'Tell me in what I can assist you; or how serve these last wishes of the imprisoned Douglas.'

Monteith replied by reading over again this sentence,— '"Should my son remain abroad, and you ever be in extremity, commit the box in strict charge to the worthiest Scot you know."—I am in that extremity now. Edward determined on desolation, when he placed English governors throughout our towns; and the rapacious Heselrigge, his representative in Lanark, not backward to execute the despot's will, has just issued an order, for the houses of all the absent chiefs to be searched for records and secret correspondences. Two or three in the neighbourhood have already gone through this ordeal; but the event has proved that it was not papers they sought, but plunder, and an excuse for dismantling the castles, or occupying them with English officers.

'The soldiers you saw were sent, by daybreak this morning, to guard this castle until Heselrigge could in person be present at the examination. This ceremony is to take place to-morrow; and as Lord Douglas is considered a traitor to Edward, I am told the place will be sacked to its walls. In such *an extremity*, to you, noble Wallace, as to *the worthiest Scot I know*, I apply to take charge of this box. Within the remote cliffs of Ellerslie it must be safe; and when

James Douglas arrives from Paris, to him you will resign it. Meanwhile, as I cannot resist the plunderers, after delivering the keys of the state apartments to Heselrigge to-morrow, I shall submit to necessity, and beg his permission to retire to my lodge on Ben Venu.'

Wallace made no difficulty in granting Monteith's request; and, there being two iron rings on each side of his charge, the young chief took off his leathern belt, and putting it through them, swung the box easily under his left arm, while covering it with his plaid.

Monteith's eyes now brightened,—the paleness left his cheek,—and with a firmer step, as if suddenly relieved of a heavy load, he called a servant to prepare Sir William Wallace's attendants.

While Wallace shook him by the hand, Monteith, in a low and solemn voice, exhorted him to caution respecting the box. 'Remember,' added he, 'the penalty that hangs over him who looks into it.'

'Be not afraid,' answered Wallace; 'even the outside shall never be seen by other eyes than my own, unless the same circumstance which now induces you, *mortal extremity* should force me to confide it to safer hands.'

While Wallace spoke he advanced to his horse, to which he was lighted by the servants of the castle. A few English soldiers lingered about in idle curiosity. As he put his foot in the stirrup, he held the sword in his hand, which he had unbuckled from his side to leave space for his charge. Monteith, whose dread of detection was ever awake, whispered, 'Your loosened weapon may excite suspicion!' Fear incurred what it sought to avoid. He hastily pulled aside Wallace's plaid to throw it over the glittering hilt of the sword, and thus exposed the iron box. The light of the torches striking upon the polished rivets, displayed it to all lookers on, but no remark was made. Wallace, not observing what was done, again shook hands with Monteith, and calling his servants about him galloped away. A murmur was heard, as if of some intention to follow him; but

deeming it prudent to leave the open and direct road because of the English marauders who swarmed there, he was presently lost amid the thick shades of Clydesdale.

CHAPTER II

LANARK

The darkness was almost impenetrable. Musing on what had passed with Monteith, and on the little likelihood of any hero appearing, who, by freeing his country, could ever claim the privilege of investigating the mystery which was now his care, Wallace rode on; till crossing the bridge of Lanark, he saw the rising moon silver the tops of the distant hills; and then his meditations embraced a gentler subject. This was the time he had promised Marion he should be returned, and he had yet five long miles to go, before he could reach the glen of Ellerslie; he thought of her being alone—of watching, with an anxious heart, the minutes of his delay.

Abruptly turning an angle leading to the Mouse river, a cry of murder arrested his ear. He checked his horse and listened. The clashing of arms told him the sound had issued from an alley to the left. He alighted in an instant, and drawing his sword, threw away the scabbard (prophetic omen!); then, leaving his horse with one of his servants, hastened with the other three to the spot whence the noise proceeded.

On arriving, he discovered two men in tartans, with their backs to the opposite wall, furiously assaulted by a throng of Edward's soldiers. At this sight, the Scots who accompanied Wallace were so enraged that, blowing their bugles to encourage the assailed, they joined hand to hand with their gallant leader, and attacking the banditti, each man cut his opponent to the ground.

Such unexpected assistance reanimated the drooping strength of one of the two, from whom the cry had issued.

He sprang from the wall with the vigour of a tiger, but at the moment received a wound in his back, which would have thrown him at the feet of his enemies, had not Wallace caught him in his left arm, and with his right cleared the way, while he cried to his men who were fighting near him—'To the Glen!' As he spoke, he threw the now insensible stranger into their arms. The other man, whose voice had first attracted Wallace, at that instant sunk, covered with blood, on the pavement.

Two of the servants, obeying their master, carried their senseless burden towards the horses; but the third, being hemmed in by the furious soldiers, could not move. Wallace made a passage to his rescue, and effected it; but one base wretch, while the now wounded Scot was retreating, made a stroke which would have severed his head from his body, had not the trusty claymore[1] of Wallace struck down the pending weapon of the coward, and received his rushing body upon its point. He fell with bitter imprecations, calling aloud for vengeance.

A dreadful cry was now raised by the whole band of assassins:—'Murder!—treason!—Arthur Heselrigge is slain!' the uproar became general. The windows of the adjoining houses were thrown open; people armed and unarmed issued from their doors, and pressed forward to inquire the cause of the alarm. Wallace was nearly overpowered; a hundred swords flashed in the torchlight; but at the moment he expected they would be sheathed in his heart, the earth gave way under his feet, and he sunk into utter darkness.

He fell upon a quantity of gathered broom; and concluding that the weight of the thronging multitude had burst his way through the arch of a cellar, he sprung on his feet: and though he heard the curses of several wretches, who had fallen with him and fared worse, he made but one step to a half-opened door, pointed out to him by a gleam from an inner passage. The men uttered a shout, as they

[1] Claymore, an ancient Scottish sword.

saw him darken the light which glimmered through it; but they were incapable of pursuit; and Wallace, aware of his danger, darting across the adjoining apartment, burst open a window, and leaped out at the foot of the Lanark hills.

The oaths of the soldiers, enraged at his escape, echoed in his ears, till distance sunk them into hoarse murmurs. He pursued his way over the craigs; through the valley, and across the river, to the cliffs which embattle the garden of Ellerslie. Springing on the projecting point of the nearest, he leaped into a thicket of honeysuckles. This was the favourite bower of his Marion! The soft perfume as it saluted his senses, seemed to breathe peace and safety; and as he emerged from its fragrant embrace, he walked with a calmer step towards the house. He approached a door which led into the garden. It was open. He beheld his beloved leaning over a couch, on which was laid the person he had rescued. Halbert was dressing his wounds.

Wallace paused for a moment, to contemplate his lovely wife in this more lovely act of charity. Her beautiful hands held a cup to the lips of the stranger; while her long hair, escaped from its band, fell in jetty ringlets, and mingled with his silver locks.

'Marion!' exclaimed the overflowing soul of her husband. She looked up at the well-known sound, and with a cry of joy, rushing forward, threw herself into his arms: her tears flowed, she sobbed—she clung to his breast. It was the first time Wallace had been from her; she had feared it would have been the last. The hour—the conflict—the bleeding stranger! But now he was returned—he was safe!

'Art thou indeed here!' exclaimed she. Blood fell from his forehead upon her face and bosom: 'O my Wallace!' cried she, in agony.

'Fear not, my love! all is well, since our wounded countryman is safe.'

'But you bleed!' returned she. No tears now impeded her voice. Terror had checked their joyful currents; and

she felt as if she expected his life-blood to issue from the wound on which she gazed.

'I hope my preserver is not hurt?' inquired the stranger.

'Oh, no!' replied Wallace, putting back the hair from his forehead; 'a mere trifle!' That the action had discovered the gash to be wider than he thought, he saw in the countenance of his wife! She turned deadly pale. 'Marion,' said he, 'to convince you how causeless your fears are, you shall cure me yourself; and with no other surgery than your girdle!'

When Lady Wallace heard his gay tone, and saw the unforced smiles on his lips, she took courage; and, remembering the deep wounds of the stranger, which she had just assisted to dress, without any alarm for his life, she began to hope that she need not now fear for the object dearest to her in existence. Rising from her husband's arms, with a languid smile she unbound the linen fillet from her waist; and Halbert having poured some balsam into the wound, she prepared to apply the bandage; but when she lifted her husband's hair from his temple—that hair which had so often been the object of her admiration, as it hung in shining masses over his arching brows!—when the clotted blood met her fingers, a mist seemed to pass over her sight: she paused for a moment; but rallying her strength, as the cheerful sound of his voice conversing with his guest assured her fear was groundless, she tied the fillet; and, stealing a soft kiss on his cheek when she had finished, she seated herself, yet trembling, by his side.

'Gallant Wallace!' continued the stranger,—agitation had prevented her hearing what had preceded this,—'it is Donald Earl of Mar, who owes his life to you.'

'Then blest be my arm,' exclaimed Wallace, 'that has preserved a life so precious to my country!'

'May it indeed be blest!' cried Lord Mar; 'for this night it has made the Southrons[1] feel there is yet one man in

[1] Southrons and Saxons were the common appellations with which the Scots denominated the invading armies of Edward I.:—they were chiefly composed of Irish and Welsh, and foreigners.—(1809.)

Scotland who does not fear to resist oppression, and to punish treachery.'

'What treachery?' inquired Lady Wallace, her alarmed spirit still hovering about her soul's far dearer part: 'is any meant to my husband?'

'None to Sir William Wallace, more than to any other brave Scot,' replied the earl: 'but we all see the oppression of our country; we all know the treachery by which it was subjugated; and this night, in my own person, I have felt the effects of both. The English at Lanark despatched a body of men to Bothwell castle (where my family now are), on a plea that, as its lord is yet absent, they presume he is adverse to Edward; and therefore they must search his dwelling for documents to settle the point. Considering myself the representative of my brother-in-law, Lord Bothwell, and suspecting that this might be only a private marauding party, I refused to admit the soldiers; and saw them depart, swearing to return the next day with a stronger force, and storm the castle. To be ascertained of their commission, and to appeal against such unprovoked tyranny, should it be true, I followed the detachment to Lanark.

'I saw Heselrigge the governor.—He avowed the transaction; but awed by the power which he thinks I possess in the country, he consented to spare Bothwell, while I and my family remain in it. It being nearly dark, I took my leave, and was proceeding towards my servants in the court-yard, when a young man accosted me. I recognised him to be the officer who had commanded the party I had driven from the castle. Heselrigge having told me that he was his nephew, I made no hesitation to go back with him, when he informed me his uncle had forgotten something of importance, and begged me to return. I followed his steps; but instead of conducting me to the room in which I had conversed with Heselrigge, he led me along a dark passage into a small apartment, where, telling me his uncle would attend me, he suddenly retreated out of the

door, and before I could recollect myself I heard him bolt it after him.

'I now saw myself a prisoner; and alarmed at what might be intended to my defenceless family, I made every essay to force the door, but it was in vain. Driven to despair, I remained in a state of mind not to be described, when the bolt was undrawn, and two men entered, with manacles in their hands. They attempted to seize me, telling me I was the prisoner of King Edward. I did not listen further, but wounding one with my dagger, felled the other to the ground; and, darting past him, made my way through what passages I cannot tell, till I found myself in a street leading from behind the governor's house. I ran against some one as I rushed from the portal; it was my servant Neil. I hastily told him to draw his sword and follow me. We then hurried forward; he telling me he had stepped out to observe the night, while the rest of my men were awaiting me in the house, wondering at my delay.

Fearing the worst of consequences from the treachery of Heselrigge, I was hastening onward, determined to pursue my way on foot to the protection of my family, when at the turning of an angle which leads to the Bothwell road, we were suddenly surrounded by armed men. The moon shone full on their faces, and I discovered they were Southrons, and that young Heselrigge was at their head.

'He aimed a blow at my head with his battle-axe, and in a voice of triumph exclaimed to his soldiers, "The plunder of Bothwell, my lads! Down with its lord! all but the Lady Helen shall be yours!"

'In a moment every sword was directed towards me. They wounded me in several places; but the thought of my daughter gave supernatural vigour to my arm, and I defended myself till the cries of my servant brought you, my brave deliverer, to my rescue. But, while I am safe, perhaps my treacherous pursuer has marched towards Bothwell, too sure to commit the horrid violence he meditates: there are none to guard my child but a few domestics, the

unpractised sword of my stripling nephew, and the feeble arms of my wife.'

'Be easy on that head,' interrupted Wallace: 'I believe the infamous leader of the banditti fell by my hand, for the soldiers made an outcry that Arthur Heselrigge was killed; and then pressing on me to take revenge, their weight broke a passage into a vault, through which I escaped—'

'Save, save yourself, my master!' cried a man rushing in from the garden. 'You are pursued—'

While he spoke he fell insensible at Wallace's feet. It was Dugald—whom he had rescued from the blow of Heselrigge, and who, from the state of his wound, had been thus long in reaching Ellerslie.

Wallace had hardly time to give him to the care of Halbert, when the voice of war assailed his ears. The tumult of men demanding admittance, and the terrific sound of spears rattling against the shields of their owners, told the astonished group within that the house was beset by armed foes.

'Blood for blood!' cried a horrid voice, which penetrated the almost palsied senses of Lady Marion. 'Vengeance on Wallace, for the murder of Heselrigge!"

'Fly, fly!' cried she, looking wildly at her husband.

'Whither?' answered he, supporting her in his arms. 'Would this be a moment to leave you, and our wounded guest? I must meet them.'

'Not now!' cried Lord Mar. 'Hear you not how numerous they are? Mark that shout! they thirst for blood. If you have love, pity, for your wife, delay not a moment. Again—'

The uproar redoubled, and the room was instantly filled with shrieking women, in their night-clothes, the attendants of Lady Wallace. She lay, almost expiring, on her husband's breast.

'O my lord!' cried the terrified creatures, wringing their hands, 'what will become of us! The Southrons are at the gates, and we shall be lost for ever.'

Marion Begs Wallace to Flee

'Fear not,' replied Wallace; 'retire to your chambers. I am the person they seek: none else will meet with injury.'

Appeased by this assurance, the women retreated to their apartments; and Wallace, turning to the earl, who continued to enforce the necessity of his flight, repeated, that he would not consent to leave his wife in such a tumult.

'Leave me,' cried she, in an inarticulate voice; 'or see me die.'

As she spoke, there was a violent crash, and a tremendous burst of imprecations. Three of Wallace's men ran panting into the room. Two of the assailants had climbed to the hall window; and had just been thrown back upon the cliffs, where one was killed. 'Conceal yourself,' said the Scots to Wallace; 'for in a few minutes more your men will not be able to maintain the gates.'

'Yes, my dear lord,' cried Halbert, 'there is the dry well at the end of the garden; at the bottom of that you will be safe.'

'By your love for me, Wallace—by all you owe to the tender affections of your grandfather, hearken to him!' cried Lady Marion, falling at his feet, and clasping his knees. 'I kneel for my life in kneeling for yours! Pity the grey hairs of Sir Ronald, whom your untimely death would bring to the grave! Pity your unborn child! Fly, Wallace, fly, if you would have me live!' She was pale and breathless.

'Angel of my life!' exclaimed Wallace, straining her to his heart, 'I obey thee. But if the hand of one of these desperate robbers dares to touch thy hallowed person—'

'Think not so, my lord,' interrupted Halbert: 'it is you they seek. Not finding you, they will be too eager in pursuit to molest your lady.'

'I shall be safe,' whispered Marion; 'only fly—while you are here their shouts kill me.'

'But thou shalt go with me,' returned he, 'the well will contain us all. But first let our faithful Halbert and these honest fellows lower Lord Mar into the place of refuge.

He being the cause of the affray, if discovered, would be immediately sacrificed.'

Lord Mar acquiesced; and while the contention was so loud without, as to threaten the tearing down of the walls, the earl was carried into the garden. He was followed by Sir William Wallace, to whose arm his wife yet fondly clung. At every cry of the enemy, at every shock they gave to his yet impregnable gates, she breathed the shorter, and was clasped by the lord of her heart still more closely to his bosom.

At the well-side they found the earl bound with the rope that was to lower him to the bottom. By great care it was safely done; and the cord being brought up again, before it was tied round Wallace (for his agonised wife insisted he should descend next), he recollected that the iron box at his side might hurt the wounded nobleman by striking him in his descent; and, unbuckling it, he said it contained matters of great value, and ordered it to be lowered first.

Lord Mar, beneath, was releasing it from the rope, when a shout of triumph pierced their ears. A party of the English, having come round the heights, had leaped the wall of the garden, and were within a few yards of the well. For Wallace to descend now was impossible. 'That tree!' whispered Marion, pointing to an oak near which they stood. As she spoke, she slid from his arms, and, along with the venerable Halbert, who had seized her hand, disappeared amid the adjoining thicket. The two servants fled also.

Wallace, finding himself alone, the next instance, like one of his native eagles, was looking down from the towering top of the wood upon his enemies. They passed beneath him, denouncing vengeance upon the *assassin of Arthur Heselrigge!* One, who by the brightness of his armour seemed to be their leader, stopped under the tree, and complained he had so sprained his ankle in leaping the wall, he must wait a few minutes to recover himself. Several soldiers drew towards him; but he ordered them to

pursue their duty, search the house, and bring Wallace, dead or alive, before him.

They obeyed; but others, who had gained admittance to the tower through the now forced gates, soon ran to him with information that the murderer could nowhere be found.

'But here is a *gay ladie*,' cried one; 'perhaps she can tell of his hiding-place.' And at that moment Marion, with Halbert, appeared amongst a band of men. The lighted torches which the soldiers held, shone full on her face. Though pale as monumental marble, the exquisite beauty of her features, and the calm dignity which commanded from her eyes, awed the officer into respect and admiration.

'Soldiers stand back!' cried he, advancing to Lady Wallace. 'Fear not, madam.' As the words passed his lips, a flight of arrows flew into the bosom of the tree. A piercing shriek from Marion was her only answer. 'Hah! my lady's falcon!' cried Halbert, alarmed, doubly, for the fate of his master. A sudden agitation of the branches, having excited an indefinite suspicion in a body of archers who stood near, with one impulse they had discharged their arrows to the spot. Halbert's ready excuse, both for the disturbance in the tree and his lady's shriek, was prompted and warranted true by the appearance of a large bird, which the rushing of the arrows had frighted from her nest: she rose suddenly from amongst the branches, and soared away, far to the east, with loud screams.

All being again still, Marion hoped that her husband had escaped any serious injury from the arrows; and turning with recovered composure to the officer, heard him with a glow of comfort reprimand his men for daring to draw their bows without his orders. Then addressing her, 'I beg your pardon, madam,' said he, 'both for the alarm these hot-headed men have occasioned you, and for the violence they have committed in forcing one of your sex and beauty before me. Had I expected to have found a lady here I should have issued orders to have prevented

this outrage; but I am sent hither in quest of Sir William Wallace; who, by a mortal attack made on the person of the governor of Lanark's nephew, has forfeited his life. The scabbard of his sword, found beside the murdered Heselrigge, is an undeniable proof of his guilt. Direct us to find him, and not only release, but the favour of the English monarch will await your allegiance.'

'I am Sir William Wallace's wife,' returned the gentle Marion in a firm tone; 'and by what authority you seek him thus, and presume to call him guilty, I cannot understand.'

'By the authority of the laws, madam, which he has violated.'

'What laws?' rejoined she; 'Sir William Wallace acknowledges none but those of God and his country.—Neither of these has he transgressed.'

The officer replied, 'This night he assassinated Arthur Heselrigge in the streets of Lanark; and that condemns him, by the last declaration of King Edward:—*Whatever Scot maltreats any one of the English soldiers, or civil officers, garrisoned in the towns of Scotland, shall thereby forfeit his life, as the penalty of his crime.*

'A tyrant's law, sir, to which no freeborn Scot will submit! But even were it allowed by my countrymen, in this case it can have no hold on my husband. That he is a Scot, he glories; and not that he maltreated any Englishman in the streets of Lanark, do I glory; but because, when he saw two defenceless men borne down by a band of armed soldiers, he exposed his unshielded breast in their defence! one of the two died, covered with wounds. That the governor's nephew also fell, was a just retribution for his heading so unequal a contest, and no crime in Sir William Wallace; for he slew him to preserve a feeble old man, who had a hundred English swords levelled at his life.'

The officer paused for a moment, and then ordering his soldiers to fall further back, when they were at a sufficient distance, he offered to take Lady Wallace's hand. She

withstood his motion with a reserved air, and said, 'Speak sir, what you would say, or allow me to retire.'

'I mean not to offend you, noble lady,' continued he: 'had I a wife lovely as yourself, and I in like circumstances, I hope in the like manner she would defend my life and honour. I knew not the particulars of the affair in which Arthur Heselrigge fell, till I heard them from your lips. I can easily credit them, for I know his unmanly character. Wallace is a Scot; and acted in Scotland, as Gilbert Hambledon would have done in England, were it possible for any vile foreigner to there put his foot upon the neck of a countryman of mine. Wherever you have concealed your husband, let it be a distant asylum. At present no track within the jurisdicton of Lanark will be left unsearched by the governor's indefatigable revenge.'

Lady Wallace, overcome with gratitude at this generous speech of the English officer, uttered some inarticulate words, expressive more in sound than clearness, of her grateful feelings. Hambledon continued:—'I will use my influence with Heselrigge, to prevent the interior of your house being disturbed again; but it being in the course of military operations, I cannot free you from the disagreeable ceremony of a guard being placed to-morrow morning round the domains. This I know will be done to intercept Sir William Wallace, should he attempt to return.'

'Oh! that he were indeed far distant!' thought the anxious Marion. The officer then added: 'However, you shall be relieved of my detachment directly.' And as he spoke, he waved his sword to them who had seized the harper. They advanced, still holding their prisoner. He ordered them to commit the man to him, and to sound. The trumpeter obeyed; and in a few seconds the whole detachment were assembled before their commander.

'Soldiers!' cried he; 'Sir William Wallace has escaped our hands. Mount your horses, that we may return to Lanark, and search the other side of the town. Lead forth and I will follow.'

The troops obeyed; and falling back through the opened gates, left Sir Gilbert Hambledon alone with Lady Wallace and the wondering Halbert. The brave young man took the now no longer withdrawn hand of the grateful Marion, who had stood trembling while so many of her husband's mortal enemies were assembled under the place of his concealment.

'Noble Englishman,' said she, as the last body of soldiers passed from her sight, 'I cannot enough thank you for this generous conduct! but, should you or yours be ever in the like extremity with my beloved Wallace; (and in these tyrannous times, what brave spirit can answer for its continued safety?) may the ear which has heard you this night, at that hour repay my gratitude!'

'Sweet lady,' answered Hambledon, 'I thank you for your prayer. God is indeed the benefactor of a true soldier; and though I serve my King, and obey my commanders, yet it is only to the Lord of battles that I look for a sure reward. And whether he pay me here with victories and honours, or take my soul through a rent in my breast, to receive my laurel in paradise, it is all one to Gilbert Hambledon. But the night is cold: I must see you safe within your own doors; and then, lady, farewell!'

Lady Wallace yielded to the impulse of his hand, and with redoubled haste, as she heard another rustling in the tree above her head. Hambledon did not notice it; but desiring Halbert to follow, in a few minutes disappeared with the agitated Marion into the house.

Wallace, whose spirit could ill brook the sight of his domains filled with hostile troops, and the wife of his bosom brought a prisoner before their commander, would instantly have braved all dangers, and have leaped down amongst them; but at the instant he placed his foot on a lower bough to make a spring, the courteous address of Hambledon to his wife had made him hesitate. He listened to the replies of his Marion with exultation; and when the Englishman ordered his men to withdraw, and delivered

himself so generously respecting the safety of the man he came to seize, Wallace could hardly prevent a brave confidence in such virtue from compelling him to come from his concealment, and thank his noble enemy on the spot. But a consideration that such disclosure would put the military duty and the generous nature of the officer at variance, he desisted with such an agitation of spirits that the boughs had again shaken under him, and reawakened the alarm of his trembling wife.

'Sir William! my master!' cried a well-known voice, in a suppressed tone, as if still fearful of being overheard. It was Halbert's. 'Speak, my dear lord; are you safe?'

'In heart and body!' returned Wallace, sliding from the tree, and leaping on the ground. 'One only of the arrows touched me; and that merely striking my bugle, fell back amongst the leaves. I must now hasten to the dearest, the noblest of women!'

Halbert begged him to stay till they should hear the retreat from the English trumpets. 'Till their troops are out of sight,' added he, 'I cannot believe you safe.'

'Hark!' cried Wallace; 'the horses are now descending the craig. That must satisfy you, honest Halbert.' With these words he flew across the grass, and entering the house, met the returning Marion, who had just bade farewell to Hambledon. She rushed into his arms, and with the excess of a disturbed and uncertain joy, fainted on his neck.

'My life! my best treasure! preserver of thy Wallace! look on him!' exclaimed he: 'bless him with a smile from those dear eyes.'

His voice, his caresses, soon restored her to sensibility and recollection. She wept on his breast, and with love's own eloquence, thanked heaven that he had escaped the search and the arrows of his enemies.

'But, my dear lady,' interrupted Halbert; 'remember my master must not stay here. You know the English

commander said he must fly far away. Nay, spies may even now be lurking to betray him.'

'You are right,' cried she. 'My Wallace, you must depart. Should the guard arrive soon, your flight may be prevented. You must go now—but, oh! whither?'

'Not very distant, my love. In going from thee, I leave behind all that makes life precious to me; how then can I go far away? No! there are recesses among the Cartlane craigs, I discovered while hunting, and which I believe have been visited by no mortal foot but my own. There will I be, my Marion, before sunrise: and before it sets, thither must you send Halbert, to tell me how you fare. Three notes from thine own sweet strains of *Thusa ha measg na reultan, mor*,[1] blown by his pipe, shall be a sign to me that he is there; and I will come forth to hear tidings of thee.'

'Ah, my Wallace, let me go with thee!'

'What, dearest!' returned he, 'to live amidst rocks and streams! to expose thy tender self, and thine unborn infant, to all the accidents of such a lodging!'

'But are not you going to so rough, so dangerous a lodging?' asked she: 'O! would not rocks and streams be heaven's paradise to me, when blessed with the presence of my husband? Ah! let me go!'

'Impossible, my lady,' cried Halbert; afraid that the melting heart of his master would consent: 'you are safe here; and your flight would awaken suspicion in the English that he had not gone far. Your ease and safety are dearer to him than his own life; and most likely by his cares to preserve them, he would be traced; and so fall a ready sacrifice to the enemy.'

'It is true, my Marion; I could not preserve you in the places to which I go.'

[1] *Thusa ha measg na reultan, mor*, &c. are the beginning words of an old Gaelic ditty, the English of which runs thus:—
"Thou who art amid the stars, move to thy bed with music," &c.
—(1809.)

'But the hardships you will endure!' cried she; 'to sleep on the cold stones, with no covering but the sky, or the dripping vault of some dreary cave! I have not courage to abandon you alone to such cruel rigours.'

'Cease, my beloved!' interrupted he, 'cease these groundless alarms. Neither rocks nor storms have any threats to me. It is only tender woman's cares that make man's body delicate. Before I was thine, my Marion, I have lain whole nights upon the mountain's brow, counting the wintry stars, as I impatiently awaited the hunter's horn that was to recall me to the chase in Glenfinlass. Alike to Wallace is the couch of down or the bed of heather; so, best beloved of my heart, grieve not at hardships which were once my sport, and will now be my safety.'

'Then farewell! May good angels guard thee!' Her voice failed; she put his hand to her lips.

'Courage, my Marion,' said he; 'remember that Wallace lives but in thee. Revive, be happy for my sake; and God, who putteth down the oppressor, will restore me to thine arms.' She spoke not, but rising from his breast clasped her hands together, and looked up with an expression of fervent prayer; then smiling through a shower of tears, she waved her hand to him to depart, and instantly disappeared into her own chamber.

Wallace gazed at the closed door, with his soul in his eyes. Here indeed his brave spirit gave way; and he would have followed her, and perhaps have determined to await his fate at her side, had not Halbert, reading his mind in his countenance, taken him by the arm, and drawn him towards the portal.

Wallace soon recovered his better reason, and obeying the friendly impulse of his servant, accompanied him through the garden, to the quarter which pointed towards the heights that led to the remotest recesses of the Clyde. In their way they approached the well where Lord Mar lay. Finding that the Earl had not been inquired for, Wallace deemed his stay to be without peril; and intending

to inform him of the necessity which still impelled his own flight, he called to him, but no voice answered. He looked down, and seeing him extended on the bottom, without motion, 'I fear,' said he, 'the Earl is dead. As soon as I am gone, and you can collect the dispersed servants, send one into the well to bring him forth; and if he be indeed no more, deposit his body in my oratory, till you can receive his widow's commands respecting his remains. The iron box now in the well, is of inestimable value: take it to Lady Wallace, and tell her she must guard it, as she has done my life; but not to look into it, at the peril of what is yet dearer to her—my honour.'

Halbert promised to adhere to his master's orders; and Wallace, girding on his sword, and taking his hunting-spear, (with which the care of his venerable domestic had provided him,) he pressed the faithful hand that presented it, and again enjoining him to be watchful of the tranquillity of his lady, and to send him tidings of her in the evening, to the cave near the Corie Lin, he climbed the wall, and was out of sight in an instant.

CHAPTER III

ELLERSLIE

Halbert returned to the house; and entering the room softly, into which Marion had withdrawn, beheld her on her knees before a crucifix: she was praying for the safety of her husband.

'May he, O gracious Lord!' cried she, 'soon return to his home. But if I am to see him no more, oh, may it please Thee to grant me to meet him within Thy arms in heaven!'

'Hear her, blessed Son of Mary!' ejaculated the old man. She looked round, and rising from her knees, demanded of him, in a kind but anxious voice, whether he had left her lord in security.

'In the way to it, my lady!' answered Halbert. He repeated all that Wallace had said at parting; and then tried to prevail on her to go to rest. 'Sleep cannot visit my eyes this night, my faithful creature,' replied she; 'my spirit will follow Wallace in his mountain flight. Go you to your chamber. After you have had repose, that will be time enough to revisit the remains of the poor Earl, and to bring them with the box to the house. I will take a religious charge of both, for the sake of the dear entruster.'

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Halbert persuaded his lady to lie down on the bed, that her limbs at least might rest after the fatigue of so harassing a night; and she, little suspecting that he meant to do otherwise than to sleep also, kindly wished him repose, and retired.

Her maids, during the late terror, had dispersed, and were nowhere to be found: and the men too, after their stout resistance at the gates, had all disappeared; some fled, others were sent away prisoners to Lanark, while the good Hambledon was conversing with their lady. Halbert therefore resigned himself to await with patience the rising of the sun, when he hoped some of the scared domestics would return; if not, he determined to go to the cotters who lived in the depths of the glen, and bring some of them to supply the place of the fugitives; and a few, with stouter hearts, to guard his lady.

Thus musing, he sat on a stone bench in the hall, watching anxiously the appearance of that orb, whose setting beams he hoped would light him back with tidings of Sir William Wallace to comfort the lonely heart of his Marion. All seemed at peace. Nothing was heard but the sighing of the trees as they waved before the western window, which opened towards the Lanark hills. The morning was yet grey, and the fresh air blowing in rather chilly, Halbert rose to close the wooden shutter; at that moment his eyes were arrested by a party of armed men in quick march down the opposite declivity. In a few

minutes more their heavy steps sounded in his ears, and he saw the platform before the house filled with English. Alarmed at the sight, he was retreating across the apartment, towards his lady's room, when the great hall door was burst open by a band of soldiers, who rushed forward and seized him.

'Tell me, dotard!' cried their leader, a man of low stature, with grey locks, but a fierce countenance, 'where is the murderer? Where is Sir William Wallace? Speak, or the torture shall force you.'

Halbert shuddered, but it was for his defenceless lady, not for himself. 'My master,' said he, 'is far from this.'

'Where?'

'I know not,'

'Thou shalt be made to know, thou hoary-headed villian!' cried the same violent interrogator. 'Where is the assassin's wife? I will confront ye. Seek her out.'

At that word the soldiers parted right and left, and in a moment afterwards, three of them appeared with shouts, bringing in the trembling Marion.

'Alas! my lady!' cried Halbert, struggling to approach her, as with terrified apprehension she looked around her; but they held her fast, and he saw her led up to the merciless wretch, who had given the orders to have her summoned.

'Woman!' cried he, 'I am the governor of Lanark. You now stand before the representative of the great King Edward, and on your allegiance to him, and on the peril of your life, I command you to answer me three questions. Where is Sir William Wallace, the murderer of my nephew? Who is that old Scot, for whom my nephew was slain? He and his whole family shall meet my vengeance! And tell me where is that box of treasure which your husband stole from Douglas Castle? Answer me these questions on your life.'

Lady Wallace remained silent.

'Speak, woman!' demanded the governor. 'If fear cannot move you, know that I can reward as well as avenge.

I will endow you richly, if you declare the truth. If you persist to refuse, you die.'

'Then I die,' replied she, scarcely opening her half-closed eyes as she leaned, fainting and motionless, against the soldier who held her.

'What!' cried the governor, stifling his rage, in hopes to gain by persuasion on a spirit he found threats could not intimidate; 'can so gentle a lady reject the favour of England; large grants in this country, and perhaps a fine English knight for a husband, when you might have all for the trifling service of giving up a traitor to his liege lord, and confessing where his robberies lie concealed? Speak, fair dame; give me this information, and the lands of the wounded chieftain whom Wallace brought here, with the hand of the handsome Sir Gilbert Hambledon, shall be your reward. Rich, and a beauty in Edward's court! Lady, can you now refuse to purchase all, by declaring the hiding-place of the traitor Wallace?'

'It is easier to die!'

'Fool!' cried Heselrigge, driven from his assumed temper by her steady denial. 'What! is it easier for these dainty limbs to be hacked to pieces by my soldiers' axes? Is it easier for that fair bosom to be trodden under foot by my horses' hoofs; and for that beauteous head of thine to decorate my lance? Is all this easier than to tell me where to find a murderer and his gold?'

Lady Wallace shuddered: she stretched her hands to heaven.

'Speak once for all!' cried the enraged governor, drawing his sword; 'I am no waxen-hearted Hambledon, to be cajoled by your beauty. Declare where Wallace is concealed, or dread my vengeance.'

The horrid steel gleamed across the eyes of the unhappy Marion; unable to sustain herself, she sunk on the ground.

'Kneel not to me for mercy!' cried the fierce wretch; 'I grant none, unless you confess your husband's hiding-place.'

A momentary strength darted from the heart of Lady Wallace to her voice. 'I kneel to heaven alone, and may it ever preserve my Wallace from the fangs of Edward and his tyrants!'

'Blasphemous wretch!' cried the infuriate Heselrigge, and in that moment he plunged his sword into her defenceless breast. Halbert, who had all this time been held back by the soldiers, could not believe that the fierce governor would perpetrate the horrid deed he threatened; but seeing it done, with a giant's strength and a terrible cry he burst from the hands which held him, and had thrown himself on the bleeding Marion, before her murderer could strike his second blow. However, it fell, and pierced through the neck of the faithful servant before it reached her heart. She opened her dying eyes, and seeing who it was that would have shielded her life, just articulated 'Halbert! my Wallace—to God—' and with the last unfinished sentence, her pure soul took its flight to regions of eternal peace.

The good old man's heart almost burst, when he felt that before-heaving bosom now motionless, and groaning with grief, and fainting with loss of blood, he lay senseless on her body.

A terrible stillness was now in the hall. Not a man spoke, all stood looking on each other with a stern horror marking each pale coutenance. Heselrigge, dropping his blood-stained sword on the ground, perceived by the behaviour of his men that he had gone too far, and fearful of arousing the indignation of awakened humanity to some act against himself, he addressed the soldiers in an unusual accent of condescention: 'My friends,' said he, 'we will now return to Lanark: to-morrow you may come back, for I reward your services of this night with the plunder of Ellerslie.'

'May a curse light on him who carries a stick from its grounds!' exclaimed a veteran, from the further end of the hall. 'Amen!' murmured all the soldiers, with one

consent; and falling back, they disappeared, one by one, out of the great door, leaving Heselrigge alone with the soldier, who stood leaning on his sword, looking on the murdered lady.

'Grimsby, why stand you there?' demanded Heselrigge: 'follow me.'

'Never,' returned the soldier.

'What!' exclaimed the governor, momentarily forgetting his panic; 'dare you speak thus to your commander? March on before me this instant, or expect to be treated as a rebel.'

'I march at your command no more,' replied the veteran, eyeing him resolutely: 'the moment you perpetrated this bloody deed, you became unworthy the name of man; and I should disgrace my own manhood, were I ever again to obey the word of such a monster!'

'Villain!' cried the enraged Heselrigge, 'you shall die for this!'

'That may be,' answered Grimsby, 'by the hands of some tyrant like yourself; but no brave man, not the royal Edward, would do otherwise than acquit his soldier, for refusing obedience to the murderer of an innocent woman. It was not so he treated the wives and daughters of the slaughtered Saracens, when I followed his banners over the fields of Palestine!'

'Thou canting miscreant!' cried Heselrigge, springing on him suddenly and aiming his dagger at his breast. But the soldier arrested the weapon, and at the same instant closing upon the assassin, with a turn of his foot threw him to the ground. Heselrigge, as he lay prostrate, seeing his dagger in his adversary's hand, with the most dastardly promises implored for life.

'Monster!' cried the soldier, 'I would not pollute my honest hands with such unnatural blood. Neither, though thy hand has been lifted against my life, would I willingly take thine. It is not rebellion against my commander, that actuates me, but hatred of the vilest of murderers.

I go far from you, or your power; but if you forswear your voluntary oath, and attempt to seek me out for vengeance, remember it is a soldier of the cross you pursue, and a dire retribution shall be demanded by Heaven, at a moment you cannot avoid, and with a horror commensurate with your crimes.'

There was a solemnity and a determination in the voice and manner of the soldier, that paralysed the intimidated soul of the governor: he trembled violently, and repeating his oath of leaving Grimsby unmolested, at last obtained his permission to return to Lanark. The men, in obedience to the conscience-struck orders of their commander, had mounted their horses, and were now far out of sight, Heselrigge's charger was still in the court-yard: he was hurrying towards it, but the soldier, with a prudent suspicion, called out, 'Stop, sir! you must walk to Lanark. The cruel are generally false: I cannot trust your word, should you have the power to break it. Leave this horse here—to-morrow you may send for it, I shall then be far away.'

Heselrigge saw that remonstrance would be unavailing; and shaking with impotent rage, he turned into the path which, after five weary miles, would lead him once more to his citadel.

From the moment the soldier's manly spirit had dared to deliver its abhorrence of Lady Wallace's murder, he was aware that his life would no longer be safe within reach of the machinations of Heselrigge; and determined, alike by detestation of him and regard for his own preservation, he resolved to take shelter in the mountains, till he could have an opportunity of going beyond sea to join his king's troops in the Guienne wars.

Full of these thoughts he returned into the hall. As he approached the bleeding group on the floor, he perceived it move; hoping that perhaps the unhappy lady might not be dead, he drew near; but, alas! as he bent to examine, he touched her hand and found it quite cold. The blood which

had streamed from the now exhausted heart, lay congealed upon her arms and bosom. Grimsby shuddered. Again he saw her move; but it was not with her own life; the recovering senses of her faithful servant, as his arms clung around the body, had disturbed the remains of her who would wake no more.

On seeing that existence yet struggled in one of these blameless victims, Grimsby did his utmost to revive the old man. He raised him from the ground, and poured some strong liquor he had in a flask, into his mouth. Halbert breathed freer; and his kind surgeon, with the venerable harper's own plaid, bound up the wound in his neck. Halbert opened his eyes. When he fixed them on the rough features and English helmet of the soldier, he closed them again with a deep groan.

'My honest Scot,' said Grimsby, 'trust in me. I am a man like yourself; and though a Southron, am no enemy to age and helplessness.'

The harper took courage at these words: he again looked at the soldier; but suddenly recollecting what had passed, he turned his eyes towards the body of his mistress, on which the beams of the now rising sun were shining. He started up, and staggering towards her, would have fallen, had not Grimsby supported him. 'O what a sight is this!' cried he, wringing his hands. 'My lady! my lovely lady! see how low she lies, who was once the delight of all eyes, the comforter of all hearts.' The old man's sobs suffocated him. The veteran turned away his face; a tear dropped upon his hand. 'Accursed Heselrigge,' ejaculated he, 'thy fate must come!'

'If there be a man's heart in all Scotland, it is not far distant!' cried Halbert. 'My master lives, and will avenge this murder. You weep, soldier; and you will not betray what has now escaped me.'

'I have fought in Palestine,' returned he, 'and a soldier of the cross betrays none who trust him. Saint Mary preserve your master and conduct you safely to him. We

must both hasten hence. Heselrigge will surely send in pursuit of me. He is too vile to forgive the truth I have spoken to him; and should I fall into his power, death is the best I could expect at his hands. Let me assist you to put this poor lady's remains into some decent place; and then, my honest Scot, we must separate.'

Halbert, at these words, threw himself upon the bosom of his mistress, and wept with loud lamentations over her. In vain he attempted to raise her in his feeble arms. 'I have carried thee scores of times in thy blooming infancy,' cried he; 'and now must I bear thee to thy grave? I had hoped that my eyes would have been closed by this dear hand.' As he spoke, he pressed her cold hands to his lips, with such convulsive sobs, that the soldier, fearing he would expire in the agony of his sorrow, took him almost motionless from the dead body, and exhorted him to suppress such self-destroying grief for the sake of his master. Halbert gradually revived; and listening to him, cast a wishful look on the lifeless Marion.

'There sleeps the pride and hope of Ellerslie, the mother with her child! O my master, my widowed master,' cried he, 'what will comfort thee?'

Fearing the ill-consequence of further delay, the soldier again interrupted his lamentations, with arguments for flight; and Halbert, recollecting the oratory in which Wallace had ordered the body of Lord Mar to be deposited, named it for that of his dead lady. Grimsby, immediately wrapping the beauteous corse in the white garments which hung about it, raised it in his arms; and was conducted by Halbert to a little chapel in the heart of a neighbouring cliff.

The still weeping old man removed the altar; and Grimsby, laying the shrouded Marion upon its rocky platform, covered her with the pall, which he drew from the holy table, and laid the crucifix upon her bosom. Halbert, when his beloved mistress was thus hidden from his sight, threw himself on his knees beside her, and in the

vehement language of grief, offered up a prayer for her departed soul.

'Hear me, righteous Judge of heaven and earth!' cried he; 'as Thou didst avenge the blood of innocence shed in Bethlehem, so let the grey hairs of Heselrigge be brought down in blood to the grave, for the murder of this innocent lady!' Halbert kissed the cross; and rising from his knees went weeping out of the chapel, followed by the soldier.

Having closed the door, and carefully locked it, absorbed in meditation on what would be the agonised transports of his master, when he should tell him these grievous tidings, Halbert proceeded in silence till he and his companion in passing the well were startled by a groan.

'Here is some one in extremity!' cried the soldier. 'Is it possible he lives!' exclaimed Halbert, bending down to the edge of the well with the same inquiry. 'Yes,' feebly answered the earl; 'I still exist, but am very faint. If all be safe above, I pray remove me into the upward air!' Halbert replied, that it was indeed necessary he should ascend immediately; and lowering the rope, told him to tie the iron box to it and then himself. This done, with some difficulty and the assistance of the wondering soldier (who now expected to see the husband of the unfortunate Lady Wallace emerge to the knowledge of his loss), he at last effected the Earl's release. For a few seconds the fainting nobleman supported himself on his countryman's shoulder, while the fresh morning breeze gradually revived his exhausted frame. The soldier looked at his grey locks and furrowed brow, and marvelled how such proofs of age could belong to the man whose resistless valour had discomfited the fierce determination of Arthur Heselrigge and his myrmidons. However, his doubts of the veteran before him being other than the brave Wallace, were soon satisfied by the Earl himself, who asked for a draught of the water which trickled down the opposite hill; and while Halbert went to bring it, Lord Mar raised his eyes to inquire for Sir William and the Lady Marion. He

started when he saw English armour on the man he would have accosted, and rising suddenly from the stone on which he sat, demanded, in a stern voice, 'Who art thou?'

'An Englishman,' answered the soldier: 'one who does not, like the monster Heselrigge, disgrace the name. I would assist you, noble Wallace, to fly this spot. After that, I shall seek refuge abroad; and there, on the fields of Guienne, demonstrate my fidelity to my King.'

Mar looked at him steadily: 'You mistake; I am not Sir William Wallace.'

At that moment Halbert came up with the water. The Earl drank it, though now, from the impulse surprise had given to his blood, he did not require its efficacy; and turning to the venerable bearer, he asked of him whether his master were safe.

'I trust he is,' replied the old man; 'but you, my Lord, must hasten hence. A foul murder has been committed here, since he left it.'

'But where is Lady Wallace?' asked the Earl: 'if there be such danger we must not leave her to meet it.'

'She will never meet danger more!' cried the old man, clasping his hands; 'she is in the bosom of the Virgin; and no second assassin's steel can reach her there.'

'What!' exclaimed the Earl, hardly articulate with horror; 'is Lady Wallace murdered?' Halbert answered only by his tears.

'Yes,' said the soldier; 'and detestation of so unmanly an outrage, provoked me to desert his standard. But no time must now be lost in unavailing lamentation; Heselrigge will return; and if we also would not be sacrificed to his rage, we must hence immediately.'

The Earl, struck dumb at this recital, gave the soldier time to recount the particulars. When he had finished, Lord Mar saw the necessity for instant flight, and ordered horses to be brought from the stables. Though he had fainted in the well, the present shock gave such tension to

his nerves, that he found, in spite of his wound, he could now ride without difficulty.

Halbert went as commanded, and returned with two horses. Having only amongst rocks and glens to go, he did not bring one for himself; and begging the good soldier might attend the Earl to Bothwell, he added, 'He will guard you and this box, which Sir William Wallace holds as his life. What it contains I know not; and none, he says, may dare to search into. But you will take care of it for his sake, till more peaceful times allow him to reclaim his own!'

'Fatal box!' cried the soldier, regarding it with an abhorrent eye, 'that was the leading cause which brought Heselrigge to Ellerslie.'

'How?' inquired the Earl. Grimsby then briefly related, that immediately after the return to Lanark of the detachment sent to Ellerslie, under the command of Sir Gilbert Hambledon, an officer arrived from the English garrison in Douglas, and told the governor that Sir William Wallace had that evening taken a quantity of treasure from the castle. His report was, that the English soldiers who stood near the Scottish knight when he mounted at the castle gate, saw a long iron coffer under his arm, but not suspecting its having belonged to Douglas, they thought not of it, till they overheard Sir John Monteith as he passed through one of the galleries, muttering something about gold and a box. To intercept the robber amongst his native glens, the soldiers deemed impracticable, and therefore their captain came immediately to lay the information before the governor of Lanark. As the scabbard found in the affray with young Arthur had betrayed the victor to have been Sir William Wallace, this intimation of his having been also the instrument of wresting from the grasp of Heselrigge, perhaps the most valuable spoil in Douglas, exasperated him to the most vindictive excess. Inflamed with the double furies of revenge and avarice, he ordered out a new troop, and

placing himself as its head, took the way to Ellerslie. One of the servants, whom some of Hambledon's men had seized for the sake of information, on being threatened with the torture, confessed to Heselrigge, that not only Sir William Wallace was in the house when it was attacked, but that the person whom he had rescued in the streets of Lanark, and who proved to be a wealthy nobleman, was there also. This whetted the eagerness of the governor to reach Ellerslie; and expecting to get a rich booty, without the most distant idea of the horrors he was going to perpetrate, a large detachment of men followed him.

'To extort money from you, my Lord,' continued the soldier, 'and to obtain that fatal coffer, were his main objects; but disappointed in his darling passion of avarice, he forgot he was a man, and the blood of innocence glutted his barbarous vengeance.'

'Hateful gold!' cried Lord Mar, spurning the box with his foot; 'it cannot be for itself the noble Wallace so greatly prizes it: it must be a trust.'

'I believe it is,' returned Halbert, 'for he enjoined my lady to preserve it for the sake of his honour. Take care of it then, my Lord, for the same sacred reason.'

The Englishman made no objection to accompany the Earl; and by a suggestion of his own, Halbert brought him a Scottish bonnet and cloak from the house. While he put them on, the Earl observed that the harper held a drawn and blood-stained sword in his hand, on which he stedfastly gazed. 'Whence came that horrid weapon?' cried Lord Mar.

'It is my lady's blood,' replied Halbert, still looking on it. 'I found it where she lay, in the hall, and I will carry it to my master. Was not every drop of her blood dear to him? and here are many.' As the old man spoke he bent his head on the sword, and groaned heavily.

'England shall hear more of this!' cried Mar, as he threw himself across the horse. 'Give me that fatal box, I will buckle it to my saddle-bow. Inadequate will be my

utmost care of it, to repay the vast sorrows, its preservation and mine have brought upon the head of my deliverer.'

The Englishman in silence mounted his horse, and Halbert opened a back-gate that led to the hills which lay between Ellerslie and Bothwell Castle. Lord Mar took a golden-trophied bugle from his breast: 'Give this to your master, and tell him that by whatever hands he sends it, the sight of it shall always command the services of Donald Mar. I go to Bothwell, in expectation that he will join me there. In making it his home he will render me happy, for my friendship is now bound to him by bonds which only death can sever.'

Halbert took the horn, and promising faithfully to repeat the Earl's message, prayed God to bless him and the honest soldier. A rocky promontory soon excluded them from his sight, and a few minutes more even the sound of their horses' hoofs was lost on the soft herbage of the winding dell.

'Now I am alone in this once happy spot. Not a voice, not a sound. Oh! Wallace!' cried he, throwing up his venerable arms, 'thy house is left unto thee desolate, and I am to be the fatal messenger.' With the last words he struck into a deep ravine which led to the remotest solitudes of the glen, and pursued his way in dreadful silence. No human face of Scot or English cheered or scared him as he passed along. The tumult of the preceding night, by dispersing the servants of Ellerslie, had so alarmed the poor cottagers, that with one accord they fled to their kindred on the hills; amid those fastnesses of nature, to await tidings from the valley, of when all should be still, and they might return in peace. Halbert looked to the right and to the left; no smoke, curling its grey mist from behind the intersecting rocks, reminded him of the gladsome morning hour, or invited him to take a moment's rest from his grievous journey. All was lonely and comfortless; and sighing bitterly over the wide devastation, he concealed the fatal sword and the horn under his cloak, and

with a staff, which he broke from a withered tree, took his way down the winding craigs. Many a pointed flint pierced his aged feet, while exploring the almost trackless paths, which by their direction he hoped would lead him at length to the deep caves of Corie Lynn.

CHAPTER IV

CORIE LYNN

After having traversed many a weary rood of, to him, before untrodden ground, the venerable minstrel of the house of Wallace, exhausted by fatigue, sat down on the declivity of a steep craig. The burning beams of the mid-day sun now beat upon the rocks, but the overshadowing foliage afforded him shelter, and a few berries from the brambles, which knit themselves over the path he had yet to explore, with a draught of water from a friendly burn, offered themselves to revive his enfeebled limbs. Insufficient as they appeared, he took them, blessing Heaven for sending even these, and strengthened by half an hour's rest, again he grasped his staff to pursue his way.

After breaking a passage through the entangled shrubs that grew across the only possible footing in this solitary wilderness, he went along the side of the expanding stream, which at every turning of the rocks increased in depth and violence. The rills from above, and other mountain brooks, pouring from abrupt falls down the craigs, covered him with spray, and intercepted his passage. Finding it impracticable to proceed through the rushing torrent of a cataract, whose distant roarings might have intimidated even a younger adventurer, he turned from its tumbling waters which burst from his sight, and crept on his hands and knees up the opposite acclivity, catching by the fern and other weeds to stay him from falling back into the flood below. Prodigious craggy heights towered above his head as he ascended; while the rolling clouds

which canopied their summits, seemed descending to wrap him in their 'fleecy skirts;' or the projecting rocks bending over the waters of the glen, left him only a narrow shelf in the cliff, along which he crept till it brought him to the mouth of a cavern.

He must either enter it or return the way he came, or attempt the descent of overhanging precipices, which nothing could surmount but the pinions of their native birds. Above him was the mountain. Retread his footsteps until he had seen his beloved master, he was resolved not to do—to perish in these glens would be more tolerable to him, for while he moved forward, hope, even in the arms of death, would cheer him with the whisper *that he was in the path of duty*. He therefore entered the cavity, and passing on, soon perceived an aperture, through which emerging on the other side, he found himself again on the margin of the river. Having attained a wider bed, it left him a still narrower causeway, to perform the remainder of his journey.

Huge masses of rock, canopied with a thick umbrage of firs, beech, and weeping-birch, closed over the glen and almost excluded the light of day. But more anxious, as he calculated by the increased rapidity of the stream he must now be approaching the great fall near his master's concealment, Halbert redoubled his speed. But an unlooked-for obstacle baffled his progress. A growing gloom he had not observed in the sky-excluded valley, having entirely overspread the heavens, at this moment suddenly discharged itself, amidst peals of thunder, in heavy floods of rain upon his head.

Fearful of being overwhelmed by the streams, which now on all sides crossed his path, he kept upon the edge of the river, to be as far as possible from the influence of their violence. And thus he proceeded, slowly and with trepidation, through numerous defiles; and under the plunge of many a mountain-torrent, till the augmented storm of a world of waters, dashing from side to side, and boiling

up with the noise and fury of the contending elements above, told him he was indeed not far from the fall of Corie Lynn.

The spray was spread in so thick a mist over the glen he knew not how to advance. A step further might be on the firm earth; but more probably illusive, and dash him into the roaring Lynn, where he would be ingulfed at once in its furious whirlpool. He paused and looked around. The rain had ceased, but the thunder still rolled at a distance, and echoed tremendously from the surrounding rocks. Halbert shook his grey locks, streaming with wet, and looked towards the sun, now gilding with its last rays the vast sheets of falling water.

'This is thine hour, my master!' exclaimed the old man; 'and surely I am too near the Lynn to be far from thee!'

With these words he raised the pipe that hung at his breast, and blew three strains of the appointed air. In former days it used to call from her bower, that 'fair star of evening,' the beauteous Marion, now departed for ever into her native heaven. The notes trembled as his agitated breath breathed them into the instrument; but feeble as they were, and though the roar of the cataract might have prevented their reaching a less attentive ear than that of Wallace, yet he sprang from the innermost recess under the fall, and dashing through its rushing waters, the next instant was at the side of Halbert.

'Faithful creature!' cried he, catching him in his arms, with all the joy of that moment which ends the anxious wish to learn tidings of what is dearest in the world, 'how fares my Marion?'

'I am weary,' cried the heart-stricken old man: 'take me within your sanctuary, and I will tell you all.'

Wallace perceived that his time-worn servant was indeed exhausted; and knowing the toils and hazards of the perilous track he must have passed over in his way to this fearful solitude; also remembering how, as he sat in his shelter, he had himself dreaded the effects of the storm

upon so aged a traveller, he no longer wondered at the dispirited tone of his greeting, and readily accounted for the pale countenance and tremulous step which at first had excited his alarm.

Giving the old man his hand he led him with caution to the brink of the Lynn; and then folding him in his arms, dashed with him through the tumbling water into the cavern he had chosen for his asylum. Halbert sunk against its rocky side, and putting forth his hand to catch some of the water as it fell, drew a few drops to his parched lips, and swallowed them. After this light refreshment, he breathed a little and turned his eyes upon his anxious master.

'Are you sufficiently recovered, Halbert, to tell me how you left my dearest Marion?'

Halbert dreaded to see the animated light which now cheered him from the eyes of his master, overclouded with the Cimmerian horrors his story must unfold: he evaded a direct reply: 'I saw your guest in safety; I saw him and the Iron box on their way to Bothwell.'

'What!' inquired Wallace, 'were we mistaken? was not the Earl dead when we looked into the well?' Halbert replied in the negative, and was proceeding with a circumstantial account of his recovery and his departure when Wallace interrupted him.

'But what of my wife, Halbert? why tell me of others before of her? She whose safety and remembrance are now my sole comfort?'

'Oh, my dear lord!' cried Halbert, throwing himself on his knees in a paroxysm of mental agony; 'she remembers you where best her prayers can be heard. She kneels for her beloved Wallace, before the throne of God!'

'Halbert!' cried Sir William, in a low and fearful voice, 'what would you say? My Marion—speak! tell me in one word, she lives!'

'In heaven! Her latest breath was spent in prayer for you. "My Wallace" were the last words her angel spirit uttered as it issued from her bleeding wounds.'

The cry that burst from the heart of Wallace, as he started on his feet at this horrible disclosure, seemed to pierce through all the recesses of the glen; and with an instantaneous and dismal return was re-echoed from rock to rock. Halbert threw his arms round his master's knees. The frantic blaze of his eyes struck him with affright. 'Hear me, my lord; for the sake of your wife, now an angel hovering near you, hear what I have to say.'

Wallace looked around with a wild countenance. 'My Marion near me! Blessed spirit! Oh, my murdered wife! my unborn babe! Who made those wounds?' cried he, catching Halbert's arm with a tremendous though unconscious grasp, 'tell me who had the heart to aim a blow at that angel's life?'

'The Governor of Lanark,' replied Halbert.

'How? for what?' demanded Wallace, with the terrific glare of madness shooting from his eyes. 'My wife! My wife! what had she done?'

'He came at the head of a band of ruffians, and seizing my lady, commanded her on the peril of her life, to declare where you and the Earl of Mar and the box of treasure were concealed. My lady persisted to refuse him information, and in a deadly rage he plunged his sword into her breast.' Wallace clenched his hands over his face, and Halbert went on. 'Before he aimed a second blow, I had broken from the men who held me, and thrown myself on her bosom; but all could not save her: the villain's sword had penetrated her heart!'

'Great God!' exclaimed Wallace, 'dost thou hear this murder?' His hands were stretched towards heaven; then falling on his knees, with his eyes fixed, 'Give me power, Almighty Judge!' cried he, 'to assert thy justice! Let me avenge this angel's blood, and then take me to thy mercy!'

'My gracious master,' cried Halbert, seeing him rise with a stern composure, 'here is the fatal sword: the blood on it is sacred, and I brought it to you.'

Wallace took it in his hand. He gazed at it, touched it, and kissed it frantically. The blade was hardly yet dry, and the ensanguined hue came off upon the pressure. 'Marion! Marion!' cried he, 'is it thine? Does thy blood stain my lips?' He paused for a moment, leaning his burning forehead against the fatal blade; then looking up with a terrific smile, 'Beloved of my soul! never shall this sword leave my hand till it has drunk the life-blood of thy murderer.'

'What is it you intend, my lord!' cried Halbert, viewing with increased alarm the resolute ferocity which now, blazing from every part of his countenance, seemed to dilate his figure with more than mortal daring. 'What can you do? Your single arm—'

'I am not single—God is with me. I am his avenger. Now tremble, tyranny! I come to hurl thee down!' At the word he sprang from the cavern's mouth, and had already reached the topmost cliff when the piteous cries of Halbert penetrated his ear; they recalled him to recollection, and returning to his faithful servant, he tried to soothe his fears, and spoke in a composed though determined tone. 'I will lead you from this solitude to the mountains, where the shepherds of Ellerslie are tending their flocks. With them you will find a refuge, till you have strength to reach Bothwell Castle. Lord Mar will protect you for my sake.'

Halbert now remembered the bugle, and putting it into his master's hand, with its accompanying message, asked for some testimony in return, that the Earl might know he had delivered it safely; 'Even a lock of your precious hair, my beloved master, will be sufficient.'

'Thou shalt have it, severed from my head by this accursed steel,' answered Wallace, taking off his bonnet, and letting his amber locks fall in tresses on his shoulders. Halbert burst into a fresh flood of tears, for he remembered how often it had been the delight of Marion to comb these bright tresses and to twist them round her ivory fingers.

Wallace looked up as the old man's sobs became audible, and read his thoughts: 'It will never be again, Halbert,' cried he, and with a firm grasp of the sword he cut off a large handful of his hair.

'Marion, thy blood hath marked it!' exclaimed he; 'and every hair in my head shall be dyed in the same hue, before this sword is sheathed upon thy murderers. Here, Halbert,' continued he, knotting it together, 'take this to the Earl of Mar: it is all, most likely, he will ever see again of William Wallace. Should I fall, tell him to look on that, and in my wrongs read the future miseries of Scotland, and remember that God armeth the patriot's hand. Let him act on that conviction, and Scotland may yet be free.'

Halbert placed the lock in his bosom, but again repeated his entreaties, that his master would accompany him to Bothwell Castle. He urged the consolation he would meet from the good Earl's friendship.

'If he indeed regard me,' returned Wallace, 'for my sake let him cherish you. My consolations must come from a higher hand: I go where it directs. If I live, you shall see me again; but twilight approaches—we must away. The sun must not rise again upon Heselrigge.'

Halbert now followed the rapid steps of Wallace, who, assisting the feeble limbs of his faithful servant, drew him up the precipitous side of the Lynn,[1] and then leaping from rock to rock, awaited with impatience the slower advances of the poor old harper, as he crept round a circuit of overhanging cliffs, to join him on the summit of the craigs.

Together they struck into the most inaccessible defiles of the mountains, and proceeded, till on discerning smoke whitening with its ascending curls the black sides of the impending rocks, Wallace saw himself near the objects of his search. He sprang on a high cliff projecting over this mountain-valley and blowing his bugle with a few notes

[1] The cavern which sheltered Sir William Wallace, near Corie Lynn, is yet revered by the people.

Wallace Summons his Followers to Vengeance

of the well-known *pibroch*[1] of Lanarkshire, was answered by the reverberation of a thousand echoes.

At the loved sounds which had not dared to visit their ears since the Scottish standard was lowered to Edward, the hills seemed teeming with life. Men rushed from their fastnesses, and women with their babes eagerly followed, to see whence sprung a summons so dear to every Scottish heart. Wallace stood on the cliff, like the newly-aroused genius of his country; his long plaid floated afar, and his glittering hair, streaming on the blast, seemed to mingle with the golden fires which shot from the heavens. Wallace raised his eyes—a clash as of the tumult of contending armies filled the sky, and flames, and flashing steel, and the horrid red of battle streamed from the clouds upon the hills.

'Scotsmen!' cried Wallace, waving the fatal sword, which blazed in the glare of these northern lights, like a flaming brand, 'behold how the heavens cry aloud to you! I come, in the midst of their fires, to call you to vengeance. I come in the name of all ye hold dear, of the wives of your bosoms, and the children in their arms, to tell you the poniard of England is unsheathed—innocence and age and infancy fall before it. With this sword, last night, did Heselrigge, the English tyrant of Lanark, break into my house, and murder my wife!'

The shriek of horror that burst from every mouth, interrupted Wallace. 'Vengeance! vengeance!' was the cry of the men, while tumultuous lamentations for the 'sweet Lady of Ellerslie,' filled the air from the women.

Wallace sprang from the cliffs into the midst of his brave countrymen: 'Follow me, then, to strike the mortal blow.'

'Lead on!' cried a vigorous old man. 'I drew this stout claymore last in the battle of Largs. *Life and Alexander* was then the word of victory: now, ye accursed Southrons ye shall meet the slogan of *Death and Lady Marion.*'

[1] Pibroch, a martial piece of music adapted to the Highland pipe. Each great family has one peculiarly its own.—(1809.)

'Death and Lady Marion!' was echoed with shouts from mouth to mouth. Every sword was drawn; and those hardy peasants who owned none, seizing the instruments of pasturage, armed themselves with wolf-spears, pick-axes, forks, and scythes.

Sixty resolute men now arranged themselves around their chief. Wallace, whose widowed heart turned icy cold at the dreadful slogan of his Marion's name, more fiercely grasped his sword, and murmured to himself, 'From this hour may Scotland date her liberty, or Wallace return no more! My faithful friends,' cried he, turning to his men, and placing his plumed bonnet on his head; 'let the spirits of your fathers inspire your souls! ye go to assert that freedom for which they died. Before the moon sets, the tyrant of Lanark must fall in blood.'

'Death and Lady Marion!' was the pealing answer that echoed from the hills.

Wallace again sprang on the cliffs. His brave peasants followed him; and taking their rapid march by a near cut through a hitherto unexplored defile of the Cartlane craigs, leaping chasms, and climbing perpendicular rocks, they suffered no obstacles to impede their steps, while thus rushing onward like lions to their prey.

CHAPTER V

LANARK CASTLE

The women, and the men whom age withheld from so desperate an enterprise, now thronged around Halbert, to ask a circumstantial account of the disaster which had filled all with so much horror.

Many tears followed his recital: not one of his auditors was an indifferent listener; all had individually, or in persons dear to them, partaken of the tender Marion's benevolence. Their sick beds had been comforted by her charity; her voice had often administered consolation to

their sorrows; her hand had smoothed their pillows, and placed the crucifix before their dying eyes. Some had recovered to bless her, and some departed to record her virtues in heaven.

The objects of their fond and fervent prayers, Wallace and his little army, were rapidly pursuing their march. It was midnight—all was silent as they hurried through the glen, as they ascended with flying footsteps the steep acclivities that led to the cliffs which overhung the vale of Ellerslie. Wallace must pass along their brow. Beneath was the tomb of his sacrificed Marion! He rushed forward to snatch one look, even of the roof which shrouded her beloved remains.

But in the moment before he mounted the intervening height, a soldier in English armour crossed the path, and was seized by his men. One of them would have cut him down, but Wallace turned away the weapon. 'Hold, Scot!' cried he, 'you are not a Southron, to strike the defenceless. This man has no sword.'

The reflection on their enemy, which this plea of mercy contained, reconciled the impetuous Scots to the clemency of their leader. The rescued man joyfully recognising the voice of Wallace, exclaimed, 'It is my Lord! It is Sir William Wallace that has saved my life a second time!'

'Who are you?' asked Wallace: 'that helmet can cover no friend of mine.'

'I am your servant Dugald,' returned the man; 'he whom your brave arm saved from the battle-axe of Arthur Heselrigge.'

'I cannot now ask you how you came by that armour; but if you be yet a Scot throw it off and follow me.'

'Not to Ellerslie, my Lord,' cried he; 'it has been plundered and burnt to the ground by the governor of Lanark.'

'Then,' exclaimed Wallace, striking his breast, 'are the remains of my beloved Marion for ever ravished from my eyes! Insatiate monster!'

'He is Scotland's curse,' cried the veteran of Largs; 'Forward, my Lord, in mercy to your country's groans!'

Wallace had now mounted the craig which overlooked Ellerslie. His once happy home had disappeared and all beneath lay a heap of smoking ashes. He hastened from the sight, and directing the point of his sword with a forceful action towards Lanark, re-echoed with supernatural strength, 'Forward!'

With the rapidity of lightning his little host flew over the hills, reached the cliffs which divided them from the town, and leaped down before the outward trench of the castle of Lanark. In a moment Wallace sprang so feeble a barrier; and with a shout of death, in which the tremendous slogen of his men now joined, he rushed upon the guard that held the northern gate.

Here slept the governor. These opponents being slain by the first sweep of the Scottish swords, Wallace hastened onward, winged with twofold retribution. The noise of battle was behind him; for the shout of his men had aroused the garrison and drawn its soldiers, half naked, to the spot. He reached the door of the governor. The sentinel who stood there flew before the terrible warrior that presented himself. All the mighty vengeance of Wallace blazed in his face and seemed to surround his figure with a terrible splendour. With one stroke of his foot he drove the door from its hinges, and rushed into the room.

What a sight for the now awakened and guilty Heselrigge! It was the husband of the defenceless women he had murdered, come in the power of justice, with uplifted arm and vengeance in his eyes! With a terrific scream of despair, and an outcry for the mercy he dared not expect, he fell back into the bed and sought an unavailing shield beneath its folds.

'Marion! Marion!' cried Wallace, as he threw himself towards the bed and buried the sword, yet red with her blood, through the coverlid deep into the heart of her murderer. A fiend-like yell from the slain Heselrigge, told

him his work was done; and drawing out the sword he took the streaming blade in his hand. 'Vengeance is satisfied,' cried he: 'thus O God! do I henceforth divide self from my heart!' As he spoke he snapt the sword in twain, and throwing away the pieces, put back with his hand the impending weapons of his brave companions; who having cleared the passage of their assailants, had hurried forward to assist in ridding their country of so detestable a tyrant.

' 'Tis done,' cried he. As he spoke he drew down the coverlid and discovered the body of the governor weltering in blood. The ghastly countenance, on which the agonies of hell seemed imprinted, glared horrible even in death.

Wallace turned away; but the men exulting in the sight, with a shout of triumph exclaimed, 'So fall the enemies of Sir William Wallace!'

'Rather so fall the enemies of Scotland!' cried he: 'from this hour Wallace has neither love nor resentment but for her. Heaven has heard me devote myself to work our country's freedom or to die. Who will follow me in so just a cause?'

'All!—with Wallace for ever!'

The sun was rising from the eastern hills, when the victorious group re-entered the mountain glen where their families lay. The cheerful sounds of their bugles aroused the sleepers from their caves; and many were the gratulations and embraces which welcomed the warriors to affection and repose.

While his faithful followers retired each to the bosom of his rejoicing family, the fugitive chief of Ellerslie remained alone with the old man, and recounted to him the success of his enterprise, and the double injuries he had avenged. 'The assassin,' continued he, 'has paid with his life for his inexpiable crime. He is slain and with him several of Edward's garrison. My vengeance may be appeased; but what, O Halbert, can bring redress to my widowed heart? This night my gallant Scots have sworn to accomplish my

vow, and death or liberty must be the future fate of Wallace and his friends.'

At these words tears ran down the cheeks of the venerable harper. 'Alas! my too brave master,' exclaimed he, 'what is it you would do? Why rush upon certain destruction! For the sake of her memory whom you deplore; in pity to the worthy Earl of Mar, who will arraign himself as the cause of all these calamities, and of your death, should you fall, retract this desperate vow!'

'No, my good Halbert,' returned Wallace, 'Go to Lord Mar and tell him what are my resolves. I have nothing now that binds me to life, but my country; and henceforth she shall be to me as mistress, wife, and child.'

'But where, my master, shall we find you, should the Earl choose to join you with his followers?'

'In this wilderness, whence I shall not remove rashly. My purpose is to save my countrymen, not to sacrifice them in needless dangers.'

Halbert, oppressed with sorrow at the images his foreboding heart drew of the direful scenes in which his beloved master had pledged himself to become the leader, bowed his head with submission, and leaving Wallace to his rest, retired to the mouth of the cavern to weep alone.

It was noon before the chief awaked from the death-like sleep into which kind nature had plunged his long-harassed senses. He opened his eyes languidly, and when the sight of his rocky apartment forced on him the recollection of all his miseries, he uttered a deep groan. That sad sound, so different from the jocund voice with which Wallace used to issue from his rest, struck on the heart of Halbert: he drew near his master to receive his last commands for Bothwell. 'On my knees,' added he, 'will I implore the Earl to send you succours.'

'He needs not prayers for that,' returned Wallace; 'but depart, dear, worthy Halbert; it will comfort me to know you are in safety, and whithersoever you go you carry my thanks and blessings with you.'

Half persuaded that a superior Being did indeed call his beloved master to some extraordinary exertions for Scotland, Halbert bade him an anxious farewell, and then withdrew to commit him to the fidelity of the companions of his destiny. A few of them led the old man on his way, as far as the western declivity of the hills, and then bidding him good speed, he took the remainder of his journey alone. After traversing many a weary mile, between Cartlane craigs and Bothwell Castle, he reached the valley in which that fortress stands; and calling to the warder at its gates, that he came from Sir William Wallace, was immediately admitted, and conducted into the castle.

Halbert was led by a servant into a spacious chamber, where the Earl lay upon a couch. A lady, richly habited, and in the bloom of life, sat at his head. Another, much younger, and of resplendent beauty, knelt at his feet, with a salver of medicinal cordials in her hand. The Lady Marion's loveliness had been that of a soft moonlight evening; but the face which now turned upon Halbert as he entered, was 'full of light, and splendour, and joy;' and the old man's eyes, even though dimmed in tears, were dazzled. A young man stood near her. On the entrance of Halbert, whom the Earl instantly recognised, he raised himself on his arm, and welcomed him. The young lady rose, and the young man stepped eagerly forward.

The Earl inquired anxiously for Sir William Wallace, and asked if he might expect him soon at Bothwell.

'He cannot yet come, my Lord,' replied Halbert: 'hard is the task he has laid upon his valiant head; but he is avenged! he has slain the governor of Lanark.' A faint exclamation broke from the lips of the young lady.

'How!' demanded the Earl.

Halbert now gave a particular account of the anguish of Wallace, when he was told of the sanguinary events which had taken place at Ellerslie. As the honest harper described, in his own ardent language, the devoted zeal with which the shepherds on the heights took up arms to

avenge the wrong done to their chief, the countenance of the young lady, and of the youth, glowed through tears; they looked on each other:—

Halbert now recounted the dreadful scenes which took place in that town; and that when the governor fell, Wallace made a vow never to mingle with the world again till Scotland should be free.

'Alas!' cried the Earl, 'what miracle is to effect that? Surely he will not bury those noble qualities, that prime of manhood, within the gloom of a cloister!'

'No, my Lord; he has retired to the fastnesses of Cartlane craigs.'

'Why?' resumed Mar, 'why did he not rather fly to me? This castle is strong: and while one stone of it remains upon another, not all the hosts of England should take him hence.'

'It was not your friendship he doubted,' returned the old man: 'love for his country compels him to reject all comfort in which she does not share. His last words to me were these: "I have nothing now to do, but to assert the liberties of Scotland, and to rid her of her enemies. Go to Lord Mar; take this lock of my hair, stained with the blood of my wife. It is all, most likely, he will ever again see of William Wallace. Should I fall, tell him to look on that, and in my wrongs read the future miseries of Scotland; and remember that God armeth the patriot!" '

Tears dropped so fast from the young lady's eyes, she was obliged to walk to a window, to restrain a more violent burst of grief.

'O! my uncle,' cried the youth, 'surely the freedom of Scotland is possible. I feel in my soul, that the words of the brave Wallace are prophetic.'

The Earl held the lock of hair in his hands; he regarded it, lost in meditation.

' "God armeth the patriot!" ' He paused again, his before pallid cheek taking a thousand animated hues; then raising the sacred present to his lips, 'Yes,' cried he, 'thy

vow shall be performed; and while Donald Mar has an arm to wield a sword, or a man to follow to the field, thou shalt command both him and them!'

'But not as you are, my Lord!' cried the elder lady: 'your wounds are yet unhealed; your fever is still raging! Would it not be madness, to expose your safety at such a crisis!'

'I shall not take arms myself,' answered he, 'till I can bear them to effect; meanwhile all of my clan, and of my friends, that I can raise to guard the life of my deliverer, and to promote the cause, must be summoned. This lock shall be my pennon; and what Scotsman will look on that, and shrink from his colours! Here, Helen, my child,' cried he, addressing the young lady, 'before to-morrow's dawn, have this hair wrought into my banner. It will be a patriot's standard; and let his own irresistible words be the motto—*God armeth me.*'

Helen advanced with awestruck trepidation. Having been told by the Earl, of the generous valour of Wallace, and of the cruel death of his lady, she had conceived a gratitude and a pity deeper than language could express, for the man who had lost so much by succouring one so dear to her. She took the lock, waving in yellow light upon her hands; and trembling with emotion, was leaving the room, when she heard her cousin throw himself on his knees.

'I beseech you, my honoured uncle,' cried he, 'if you have love for me, or value for my future fame, allow me to be the bearer of yon banner to Sir William Wallace.'

Helen stopped at the threshold, to hear the reply.

'You could not, my dear nephew,' returned the Earl, 'have asked me any favour I could grant with so much joy. To-morrow I will collect the peasantry of Bothwell; and with those, and my own followers, you shall join Wallace the same night.'

Ignorant of the horrors of war, and only alive to the glory of the present cause, Helen sympathised in the

ardour of her cousin; and with a thrill of sad delight hurried to her apartment, to commence her task.

Far different were the sentiments of the young countess, her stepmother. As soon as Lord Mar had let this declaration escape his lips, alarmed at the effect so much agitation might have on his enfeebled constitution, and fearful of the perilous cause he ventured thus openly to espouse, she desired his nephew to take the now comforted Halbert (who was pouring forth his gratitude to the Earl for the promptitude of his orders), and see that he was attended with hospitality.

When the room was left to the Earl and herself, she ventured to remonstrate with him upon the facility with which he had become a party in so treasonable a matter: 'Consider, my Lord,' continued she, 'that Scotland is now entirely in the power of the English monarch. His garrisons occupy our towns, his creatures hold every place of trust in the kingdom!'

'And is such a list of oppressions, my dear lady, to be an argument for longer bearing them? Had I, and other Scottish nobles, dared to resist this overwhelming power, after the battle of Dunbar; had we, instead of kissing the sword that robbed us of our liberties, kept our own unsheathed within the bulwarks of our mountains, Scotland might now be free; I should not have been insulted by our English tyrants in the streets of Lanark; and, to save my life, William Wallace would not now be mourning his murdered wife, and without a home to shelter him!'

Lady Mar paused at this observation; but resumed, 'That may be true. But the die is cast; Scotland is lost for ever; and, by your attempting to assist your friend in this rash essay to recover it, you will only lose yourself also, without preserving him. The project is wild and needless. What would you have? Now that the contention between the two kings is past; now that Baliol has surrendered his crown to Edward, is not Scotland at peace?'

'A bloody peace, Joanna,' answered the Earl; 'witness these wounds. An usurper's peace is more destructive than his open hostilities; plunder and assassination are its concomitants. I have now seen and felt enough of Edward's jurisdiction. It is time I should awake, and, like Wallace, determine to die for Scotland, or avenge her.'

Lady Mar wept. 'Cruel Donald! is this the reward of all my love and duty? you tear yourself from me, you consign your estates to sequestration, you rob your children of their name; nay, by your infectious example, you stimulate our brother Bothwell's son, to head the band that is to join this madman, Wallace!'

'Hold, Joanna!' cried the Earl: 'what is it I hear? You call the hero, who, in saving your husband's life, reduced himself to these cruel extremities, a *madman!* Was he *mad*, because he prevented the Countess of Mar from being a widow? Was he *mad* because he prevented her children from being fatherless?'

The Countess, overcome by this cutting reproach, threw herself upon her husband's neck: 'Alas! my Lord,' cried she, 'all is madness to me, that would plunge you into danger. Think of your own safety; of my innocent twins now in their cradle, should you fall. Think of our brother's feelings, when you send his only son to join one, he, perhaps, will call a rebel?'

'If Earl Bothwell considered himself a vassal of Edward's, he would not now be with Lord Loch-awe. From the moment that gallant Highlander retired to Argylshire, the King of England regarded his adherents with suspicion. Bothwell's present visit to Loch-awe, you see, is sufficient to sanction the plunder of this castle by the *peaceful* government you approve. You saw the opening of those proceedings! And had they come to their dreadful issue, where, my dear Joanna, would now be your home, your husband, your children? It was the arm of the brave chief of Ellerslie, which saved them from destruction.'

Lady Mar shuddered. 'I admit the truth of what you say. But, oh! is it not hard to put my all to the hazard; to see the bloody field on one side of my beloved Donald, and the mortal scaffold on the other?'

'Hush!' cried the Earl, 'it is justice that beckons me, and victory will receive me to her arms. Let, O Power above!' exclaimed he, in the fervour of enthusiasm; 'let the victorious field for Scotland be Donald Mar's grave, rather than doom him to live a witness of her miseries!'

'I cannot stay to hear you!' answered the Countess; 'I must invoke the Virgin, to give me courage to be a patriot's wife: at present, your words are daggers to me.'

In uttering this, she hastily withdrew, and left the Earl to muse on the past—to concert plans for the portentous future.

CHAPTER VI

BOTHWELL CASTLE

MEANWHILE the Lady Helen had retired to her own apartments. Lord Mar's banner being brought to her from the armoury, she sat down to weave into its silken texture the amber locks of the Scottish chief. Admiring their softness and beauty, while her needle flew, she pictured to herself the fine countenance they had once adorned.

The duller extremities of the hair, which a sadder liquid than that which now dropped from her eyes had rendered stiff and difficult to entwine with the warp of the silk, seemed to adhere to her fingers. Helen almost shrank from the touch. 'Unhappy lady!' sighed she to herself; 'what a pang must have rent her heart, when the stroke of so cruel a death tore her from such a husband! and how must he have loved her, when for her sake he thus forswears all future joys, but those which camps and victories may yield! Ah! what would I give to be my cousin Murray, to bear this pennon at his side! What would I give to reconcile so admirable a being to happiness

again—to weep his griefs, or smile him into comfort! To be that man's friend, would be a higher honour than to be Edward's queen.'

Her heart was thus discoursing with itself, when a page opened the door, from her cousin, who begged admittance. She had just fastened the flowing charge into its azure field, and while embroidering the motto, gladly assented.

Helen rose, as Halbert and her cousin appeared. Murray approved the execution of her work, and Halbert, with a full heart, took the pennon in his hand, 'Ah! little did my dear lady think,' exclaimed he, 'that one of these loved locks would ever be suspended on a staff to lead men to battle! What changes have a few days made! She, the gentlest of women, laid in a bloody grave; and he the most benevolent of human beings, wielding an exterminating sword!'

'You speak of her grave, venerable man?' inquired Helen: 'had you then an opportunity of performing the rites of sepulture to her remains?'

'No, madam,' replied he; 'after the worthy English soldier, now in this castle, assisted me to place her precious body in my Lord's oratory, I had no opportunity of returning to give her a more holy grave.'

'Alas!' cried Helen; 'then her sacred relics have been consumed in the burning house!'

'I hope not,' rejoined Halbert; 'the chapel I speak of is at some distance from the main building.

'Then we may hope,' rejoined she, 'that the oratory has not only escaped the flames, but perhaps the access of the English soldiers? Would it not comfort your Lord, to have that sweet victim entombed according to the rites of the church?'

'Surely, my Lady; but how can that be done? He thinks her remains were lost in the conflagration of Ellerslie; and for fear of precipitating him into the new dangers which might have menaced him had he sought to bring away her body, I did not disprove his mistake.'

'But her body shall be brought away,' rejoined Lady Helen; 'it shall have holy burial.'

'To effect this, command my services,' exclaimed Murray.

Helen thanked him for an assistance which would render the completion of her design easy. The English soldier as guide, and a troop from Bothwell, must accompany him.

'Alas! my young Lord,' interposed Halbert, 'suppose you should meet some of the English still loitering there!'

'And what of that, my honest Halbert, would not I and my trusty band make them clear the way? Is it not to give comfort to the deliverer of my uncle, that I seek the glen? and shall anything in mortal shape make Andrew Murray turn his back? No, Halbert, I was not born on Saint Andrew's day for nought; and by his bright cross I swear, either to lay Lady Wallace in the tomb of my ancestors, or to leave my bones to blanch on the grave of hers.'

Helen loved the resolution of her cousin; and believing that the now ravaged Ellerslie had no attractions to hold marauders amongst its ruins, she dismissed Lord Andrew to make his preparations, and turned herself to prefer her suit accordingly to her father.

Ere Halbert withdrew, he respectfully put her hand to his lips. 'Good night,' continued she; 'ere you see me again, I trust the earthly part of the angel now in Paradise, will be safe within these towers.' He poured a thousand blessings on her head, and almost thought that he saw in her beautiful form one of heaven's inhabitants, sent to bear away his dear mistress to her divine abode.

On entering her father's apartment, Lady Helen found him alone. She repeated to him the substance of her conversation with Wallace's faithful servant; 'and my wish is,' continued she, 'to have the murdered lady's remains entombed in the cemetery of this castle.'

The Earl approved her request, with expressions of satisfaction at the filial affection, which so lively a gratitude to his preserver evinced.

'May I then, my dear father,' returned she, 'have your permission to pay our debt of gratitude to Sir William Wallace, to the utmost of our power?'

'You are at liberty, my noble child, to do as you please. My vassals, my coffers, are all at your command.'

Helen kissed his hand: 'May I have what I please from the Bothwell armoury?'

'Command even there,' said the Earl; 'your uncle Bothwell is too true a Scot to grudge a sword in so pious a cause.'

Helen threw her arms about her father's neck, thanking him tenderly, and with a beating heart retired to prosecute her plans. Murray, who met her in the anteroom, informed her, that fifty men, the sturdiest in the glen, awaited her orders; while she, telling her cousin of the Earl's approval, took the sacred banner in her hand, and followed him to the gallery in the hall.

The moment she appeared, a shout of joy bade her welcome. Murray waved his hand in token of silence; while she, smiling with the benignity that spoke her angel errand, spoke with agitation: 'My brave friends!' said she, 'I thank you for the ardour with which, by this night's enterprise, you assist me to pay, in part, the everlasting tribute due to the man who preserved to me the blessing of a father.'

'And to us, noble lady,' cried they, 'the most generous of chiefs!'

'With that spirit, then,' returned she, 'I address ye with greater confidence. Who amongst you will shrink from following this standard to the field for Scotland's honour? Who will refuse to make himself the special guardian of the life of Sir William Wallace? and who, in the moment of peril, will not stand by him to the last?'

'None are here,' cried a young man, advancing before his fellows, 'who would not gladly die in his defence.'

'We swear it,' burst from every lip at once.

She bowed her head, and said, 'Return from Ellerslie tomorrow, with the bier of its sainted mistress. I will then

bestow upon every man in this band, a war-bonnet plumed with my coulors; and this banner shall then lead you to the side of Sir William Wallace. In the shock of battle look at its golden ensign, and remember that God not only *armeth the patriot's hand*, but shieldeth his heart. In this faith, be ye the bucklers which Heaven sends to guard the life of Wallace; and so honoured, exult in your station, and expect the future gratitude of Scotland."

'Wallace and Lady Helen! to death or liberty!' was the animated response to this exhortation; and smiling, and crossing her hands over her bosom, in token of thanks to them and to Heaven, she retired in the midst of their acclamations.

Night having passed over the sleepless heads of the inhabitants of Bothwell Castle; as soon as the sun arose, the Earl of Mar was carried from his chamber, and laid on a couch in the state apartment. His lady had not yet left the room of his daughter, by whose side she had lain the whole night, in hopes of infecting her with the fears which possessed herself.

Helen replied, that she could see no reason for such direful apprehensions, if her father, instead of joining Wallace in person, would, when he had sent him succours, retire with his family into the Highlands; and there await the issue of the contest. 'It is too late to retreat, dear madam,' continued she; 'the first blow against the public enemy was struck in defence of Lord Mar: and would you have my father act so base a part, as to abandon his preserver to the wrath such generous assistance has provoked?'

'Alas, my child!' answered the Countess, 'what great service will he have done to me, or to your father, if he deliver him from one danger, only to plunge him into another? Edward's power in this country is too great to be resisted now. Have not most of our barons sworn fealty to him? and are not the potent families of the Cummin, the Soulis, and the March, all in his interest?

You may perhaps say, that most of these are my relations, and that I may turn them which way I will; but if I have no influence with a husband, it would be madness to expect it over more distant kindred. How then, with such a host against him, can your infatuated father venture, without despair, to support the man who breaks the peace with England?'

'Who can despair, honoured lady,' returned Helen, 'in so just a cause? Let us rather believe with our good King David, that "Honour must hope always; for no real evil can befall the virtuous, either in this world or in the next!" Were I a man, the justice that leads on the brave Wallace, would nerve my arm with the strength of a host. Besides, look at our country: God's gift of freedom is stamped upon it. Our mountains are his seal. Plains are the proper territories of tyranny; there the armies of an usurper may extend themselves with ease; leaving no corner unoccupied, in which patriotism might shelter, or treason hide. But mountains, glens, morasses, lakes, set bounds to conquest; and amidst these, stands the impregnable seat of liberty. To such a fortress, to the deep defiles of Loch Katrine, or to the cloud-curtained heights of Corryarraick, I would have my father retire. In safety he may there watch the footsteps of our mountain-goddess, till, led by her immortal champion, she plants her standard again upon the hills of Scotland.'

Lady Mar looked at her. 'It is well, romantic girl, that you are of my own powerless sex: had it been otherwise, your rash-headed disobedience might have made me rue the day I became your father's wife.'

'Sex,' returned Helen, mildly, 'could not have altered my sense of duty. Whether man or woman, I would obey you in all things consistent with my duty to a higher power; but when that commands, then, by the ordinance of Heaven, we must "leave father and mother, and cleave unto it." '

'And what, O foolish Helen! do you call a higher duty than that of a child to a parent, or a husband to his wife?'

'Duty of any kind,' respectfully answered the young daughter of Mar, 'cannot be transgressed with innocence. Nor would it be any relinquishing of duty to you, should my father leave you, to take up arms in the assertion of his country's rights. Her rights are your safety; and therefore, in defending them, a husband or a son best shows his sense of domestic, as well as of public duty.'

'Who taught you this sophistry, Helen? Not your heart, for it would start at the idea of your father's blood.'

Helen turned pale. 'Perhaps, madam, had not the preservation of my father's blood occasioned such malignity from the English, that nothing but an armed force can deliver his preserver, I too might be content to see Scotland in slavery. But now, to wish my father to shrink behind the excuse of far-strained family duties, and to abandon Sir William Wallace to the bloodhounds who hunt his life, would be to devote the name of Mar to infamy, and deservedly bring a curse upon his offspring.'

'Then it is to preserve Sir William Wallace, you are thus anxious. Your spirit of freedom is now disallowed, and all this mighty gathering is for him. My husband, his vassals, your cousin, and, in short, the sequestration of the estates of Mar and Bothwell, are all to be put to the hazard, on account of a frantic outlaw; to whom, since the loss of his wife, I should suppose, death would be preferable to any gratitude we can pay him.'

Lady Helen, at this ungrateful language, inwardly thanked Heaven, that she inherited no part of the blood which animated so unfeeling a heart. 'That he is an outlaw, Lady Mar, springs from us. That death is the preferable comforter of his sorrows, also, he owes to us; for was it not for my father's sake, that his wife fell, and that he himself was driven into the wilds? I do not, then, blush for making his preservation my first prayer; and that he may achieve the freedom of Scotland, is my second.'

'We shall see whose prayers will be answered first,' returned Lady Mar, rising coldly from her seat. 'My

saints are perhaps nearer than yours; and before the close of this day, you will have reason to repent such extravagant opinions. I do not understand them.'

'Till now, you never disapproved them.'

'I allowed them in your infancy,' replied the Countess, 'because I thought they went no further than a minstrel's song; but since they are become so dangerous, I rue the hour in which I complied with the entreaties of Sir Richard Maitland, and permitted you and your sister to remain at Thirlestane, to imbibe these romantic ideas from the wizard of Ercildown.[1] Had not Sir Richard been your own mother's father, I would not have been so easily prevailed on; and thus am I rewarded for my indulgence.'

'I hope, honoured madam,' said Helen, still wishing to soften the displeasure of her stepmother, 'I hope you will never be ill-rewarded for that indulgence, either by my grandfather, my sister, or myself. Isabella, in the quiet of Thirlestane, has no chance of giving you the offence that I do; and I am forced to offend you, because I cannot disobey my conscience.' A tear stood in the eye of Lady Helen. 'Cannot you, dear Lady Mar,' continued she, forcing a smile, 'pardon the daughter of your early friend, my mother, who loved you as a sister? Cannot you forgive her Helen, for revering justice, even more than your favour?'

More influenced by the sweet humility of her daughter-in-law, than by the ingenuous eloquence with which she maintained her sentiments, or with the appeal to the memory of the first Lady Mar, the Countess relaxed the frigid air she had assumed; and kissing her, with many renewed injunctions to bless the hand that might put a final stop to so ruinous an enthusiasm in her family, she quitted the room.

[1] Few personages are so renowned in tradition as Thomas of Ercildown, usually called *The Rhymer*. He was a poet and a sage, and believed by his contemporaries to be a prophet. He was born at Ercildown, a village on the Leeder (or Lauder), where the ruins of his paternal castle, called Learmont Tower, still remain.—(1809.)

As soon as Helen was alone, she forgot the narrow-minded arguments of the Countess; and calling to recollection the generous permission with which her father had endowed her the night before, she wrapped herself in her mantle, and, attended by her page, proceeded to the armoury. The armourer was already there; having just given out arms for three hundred men, who, by the Earl's orders, were to assemble by noon on Bothwell Moor.

He drew from an oaken chest a coat of black mail, studded with gold. Helen admired its strength and beauty. 'It is the richest in all Scotland,' answered he; 'and was worn by our great Canmore in all his victories.'

'Then it is worthy its destination. Bring it, with its helmet and sword, to my apartment.'

The armourer took it up; and, accompanied by the page carrying the lighter parts, followed her into the western tower.

When Helen was again alone, it being yet very early in the morning, she employed herself in pluming the casque, and forming the scarf she meant should adorn her present. Thus time flew, till the sand-glass told her it was the eighth hour. But ere she had finished her task, she was roused from the profound stillness in which that part of the castle lay, by the doleful lament of the troop returning from Ellerslie.

Murray entered the room unobserved. 'Helen! my dear cousin!' cried he. She started, and rising, apologised for her tears by owning the truth. He now told her, that the body of the deceased lady was deposited in the chapel of the castle; and that the priests from the adjacent priory, only awaited her presence, to consign it, with the church's rites, to its tomb.

Helen retired for a few minutes to recover herself; and then re-entering, covered with a black veil, was led by her cousin to the awful scene.

The bier lay before the altar. The prior of Saint Fillan, in his holy vestments, stood at its head; a band of monks

were ranged on each side. The maids of Lady Helen, in mourning garments, met their mistress at the portal. They had wrapped the beautiful corpse in the shroud prepared for it; and now having laid it, strewed with flowers, upon the bier, they advanced to their trembling lady, expecting her to approve their services. Helen drew near—she bowed to the priests. One of the women put her hand on the pall, to uncover the once lovely face of the murdered Marion. Lady Helen hastily resisted the woman's motion, by laying her hand also upon the pall. The chill of death struck through the velvet, to her touch. She turned pale; and waving her hand to the prior to begin, the bier was lowered by the priests into the tomb beneath. As it descended, Helen sunk upon her knees, and the anthem for departed souls was raised. The pealing notes, as they rose and swelled, seemed to bear up the spirit of the sainted Marion to its native heaven; and the tears which now flowed from the eyes of Helen, as they mingled with her pious aspirations, seemed the balm of paradise descending upon her soul.

Having rewarded his trusty followers with their promised war-bonnets from the hand of Helen, and despatched them onward to the foot of Cartlane craigs, to await his arrival with the larger levy, Murray proceeded to the apartment of Lord Mar, to inform him how far he had executed his commands, and to learn his future orders. He found the veteran Earl surrounded by arms and armed men; fifty brave Scots, who were to lead the three hundred then on Bothwell Moor, were receiving their spears and swords, and other weapons, from the hands of their lord.

'Bear these stoutly, my gallant countrymen,' cried he, 'and remember, that although the dragon[1] of England has burnt up your harvests, and laid our homes in ashes; there is yet a lion in Scotland to wither his power, and glut you with his spoil!'

[1] The standard of Edward I. was a golden dragon:—a very ancient British standard, but derived from pagan times.—(1809.)

The interest of the scene, and the clatter of the arms he was dispensing, prevented anybody present hearing any sound of what was taking place beyond the room. But the Earl had hardly uttered those words, when the double-doors of the apartment were abruptly opened, and all eyes were blasted by the sudden sight of Lord Soulis,[1] and a man in splendid English armour, with a train of Southron soldiers, following this recreant Scot.

The Earl started from his couch. 'Lord Soulis! what is the occasion of this unapprised visit?'

'The ensign of the liege lord of Scotland, is my warrant!' replied he: 'you are my prisoner; and in the name of King Edward of England, I take possession of this castle.'

'Never!' cried the Earl, 'while there is a man's arm within it.'

'Man and woman,' returned Lord Soulis, 'must surrender to Edward. Three thousand English have seized three hundred of your insurgents, on Bothwell Moor. The castle is surrounded, and resistance impossible. Throw down your arms!' cried he, turning to the clansmen, who thronged round their chief; 'or be hanged for rebellion against your lawful sovereign!'

'Our lawful sovereign!' returned a young man who stood near him, 'must be the enemy of Edward; and to none else will we yield our arms!'

'Traitor!' cried the English commander, while with a sudden and dreadful stroke of his battle-axe, he laid the body of the generous Scot a headless corpse at his feet. A direful cry proceeded from his enraged comrades. Every sword was drawn; and before the bewildered and soul-struck Earl could utter a word, the furies blew their most

[1] William Lord Soulis was a powerful chief in the south of Scotland. He founded pretensions to the Scottish crown, on his descent from an illegitimate daughter of Alexander II. Soulis was a traitor to his country, and so notoriously wicked, that tradition endows him with the power of infernal necromancy. His castle of Hermitage, in Teviotdale, is still shown as the resort of malignant demons.—(1809.)

horrible blast through the chamber; and the half-frantic Mar beheld his brave Scots at one moment victorious, and in the next the floor strewed with their dead bodies. A new succession of bloodhounds had rushed in at every door; and before the exterminating sword was allowed to rest, the whole of his faithful troops lay around him, wounded and dying. Several had fallen across his body; having warded with their lives the strokes they believed levelled at his. In vain his voice had called upon his men to surrender—in vain he had implored the iron-hearted Soulis, and his coadjutor Aymer de Valence, to stop the havoc of death.

All now lay in blood; and the heat of the room, thronged by the victors, became so intolerable that De Valence, for his own sake, ordered the Earl to be removed into another apartment.

Meanwhile, unconscious of these events, Helen had lain down on her bed, to seek a few minutes' repose; and having watched the whole of the preceding night, was sunk into a profound sleep.

Murray, who was present at the abrupt entrance of the enemy, no sooner heard them declare that the castle was surrounded by a comparatively large army, than he foresaw all would be lost. On the instant, and before the dreadful signal of carnage was given in the fall of the young Scot, he slid behind the canopy of his uncle's couch; and lifting the arras, by a back door which led to some private rooms, hastily made his way to the chamber of his cousin. As he hurried along, he heard a fearful shout. He paused for a moment, but thinking it best, whatever might have happened, to secure the safety of Helen, he flew onward, and entered her room. She lay upon the bed in a deep sleep. 'Awake! Helen,' cried he; 'for your life awake!'

She opened her eyes; but, without allowing her time to speak, he hastily added, 'The castle is full of armed men, led hither by the English commander Aymer de Valence, and the execrable Soulis. Unless you fly through the vaulted passage, you will be their prisoner.'

Helen gazed at him in terror: 'Where is my father? Leave him, I cannot.'

'Fly, in pity to your father! Oh, do not hesitate! What will be his anguish, should you fall into the hands of the furious man whose love you have rejected; when it will no longer be in the power of a parent to preserve your person from the outrages of his eager and avengeful passion! If you had seen Soulis's threatening eyes—' He was interrupted by a clamour in the opposite gallery, and the shrieks of women. Helen grasped his arm: 'Alas, my poor damsels! I will go with you, whither you will, to be far from him.'

As Murray threw his arm about her waist, to impel her failing steps, his eyes fell on the banner and the suit of armour.

'All else must be left,' exclaimed he, seizing the banner; and hurrying Helen forward, he hastened with her down the stairs which led from the western watch-tower to the vaults beneath the castle. On entering the first cellar, to which a dim light was admitted through a small grating near the top, he looked round for the archway that contained the avenue of their release. Having descried it, and raised one of the large flags which paved the floor, he assisted his affrighted cousin down a short flight of steps, into the secret passage: 'This,' whispered he, 'will carry us in a direct line to the cell of the prior of St. Fillan.'

'But what will become of my father, and Lady Mar? This flight, while they are in danger! oh! I fear to complete it!'

'Rather fear the libertine Soulis,' returned Murray: 'he can only make them prisoners; and even that injury shall be of short duration. I will soon join the brave Wallace, and then, my sweet cousin, liberty, and a happy meeting!'

'Alas, his venerable harper!' cried she, suddenly remembering Halbert; 'should he be discovered to have belonged to Wallace, he, too, will be massacred by these merciless men.'

Murray stopped: 'Have you courage to remain in this darkness alone? If so, I will seek him, and he shall accompany us.'

Helen had courage for anything but the dangers Murray might encounter, by returning into the castle; but the generous youth had entered too fully into her apprehensions concerning the old man to be withheld. 'Should I be delayed in coming back,' said he, recollecting the possibility of himself being attacked and slain, 'go forward to the end of this passage; it will lead you to a flight of stairs; ascend them; and by drawing the bolt of a door, you will find yourself at once in the prior's cell.'

'Talk not of delay,' replied Helen; 'return quickly, and I will await you at the entrance of the passage.' So saying, she swiftly retraced with him her steps to the bottom of the stone stairs by which they had descended. He raised the flag, sprung out of the aperture, and closing it down, left her in solitude and darkness.

Murray passed through the first cellar, and was proceeding to the second (amongst the catacombs of which lay the concealed entrance to the private stairs), when he saw the great gates of the cellar open, and a large party of English soldiers enter. They were conducted by the butler of the castle, who seemed to perform his office very unwillingly, while they crowded in, thirsty and riotous.

Aware how unequal his single arm would be to contend with such numbers, Murray, at the first glance of these plunderers, retreated behind a heap of casks in a remote corner. While the trembling butler was loading a dozen of the men with flasks for the refreshment of their masters above, the rest were helping themselves from the adjacent catacombs. Some left the cellars with their booty, and others remained to drink it on the spot. Glad to escape the insults of the soldiers, who lay wallowing in the wine, Bothwell's old servant quitted the cellar, with the last company which bore flagons to their comrades above.

Murray listened anxiously, in hopes of hearing from his garrulous neighbours some intimation of the fate of his uncle and aunt. He hearkened in vain, for nothing was uttered by these intoxicated banditti, but loud boastings of the number each had slain in the Earl's apartment; execrations against the Scots for their obstinate resistance; and a thousand sanguinary wishes that the nation had but one neck, to strike off at a blow.

How often, during this conversation, was Murray tempted to rush out amongst them, and seize a desperate revenge! But the thought of his poor cousin, now awaiting his return, and perhaps already suffering dreadful alarms from such extraordinary uproar, restrained him; and unable to move from his hiding-place, without precipitating himself into instant death, he remained nearly an hour in the most painful anxiety, watching the dropping to sleep of this horrid crew, one by one.

When all seemed hushed—not a voice, even in a whisper, startling his ear—he ventured forth with a stealing step, towards the slumbering group. Like his brave ancestor Gaul, the son of Morni, 'he disdained to stab a sleeping foe!' He must pass them to reach the private stairs. He paused and listened. Silence still reigned; not even a hand moved, so deeply were they sunk in the fumes of wine. He took courage, and flew with the lightness of air to the secret door. As he laid his hand on it, it opened from without, and two persons appeared. By the few rays which gleamed from the expiring torches of the sleepers, he could see that the first wore English armour. Murray believed himself lost; but determined to sell his life dearly, he made a spring, and caught the man by the throat; when some one seizing his arm, exclaimed, 'Stop, my Lord Murray! it is the faithful Grimsby.' Murray let go his hold, glad to find that both his English friend, and the venerable object of his solicitude, were thus providentially brought to meet him; but fearing that the violence of his action, and Halbert's exclamation, might have alarmed the sleeping soldiers

(who, drunk as they were, were too numerous to be resisted), he laid his finger on the lip of Grimsby, and motioned to the astonished pair to follow him.

As they advanced, they perceived one of the soldiers move as if disturbed. Murray held his sword over the sleeping wretch, ready to plunge it into his heart should he attempt to rise: but he became still again; and the fugitives having approached the flag, Murray drew it up, and eager to haven his double charge, he thrust them together down the stairs. At that moment, a shriek from Helen (who had discovered, by the gleam of light which burst into the vault, a man descending in English armour) echoed through the cellars. Two of the soldiers jumped upon their feet, and rushed upon Murray. He had let the flag drop behind him; but still remaining by it, in case of an opportunity to escape, he received the strokes of their weapons upon his target, and returned them with equal rapidity. One assailant lay gasping at his feet. But the clashing of arms, and the cries of the survivor, had already awakened the whole crew. With horrid menaces they threw themselves towards the young Scot, and would certainly have cut him to pieces, had he not snatched the only remaining torch out of the hand of a staggering soldier, and extinguished it under his foot. Bewildered where to find their prey, with threats and imprecations, they groped in darkness, slashing the air with their swords, and not unfrequently wounding each other in the vain search.

Murray was now far from their pursuit. He had no sooner put out the light, than he pulled up the flag, and leaping down, drew it after him, and found himself in safety. Desperate as was the contest, it had been short; for he yet heard the footsteps of the panic-struck Helen, flying along the passage. The Englishman and Halbert, on the first falling of the flag, not knowing its spring, had unsuccessfully tried to re-raise it, that they might assist Murray in the tumult above. On his appearing again so unexpectedly, they declared their joy; but the young lord,

impatient to calm the apprehensions of his cousin, returned no other answer than 'Follow me!' while he darted forward. Terror had given her wings; and even prevented her hearing the low sounds of Murray's voice, which he durst not raise to a higher pitch, for fear of being overheard by the enemy. Thus, while she lost all presence of mind, he did not come up with her till she fell breathless against the stairs at the extremity of the vault.

CHAPTER VII

ST. FILLAN'S

As soon as Murray found her within his arms, he clasped her insensible form to his breast, and carrying her up the steps, drew the bolt of the door. It opened to his pressure, and discovered a large monastic cell, into which the daylight shone through one long narrow window. A straw pallet, an altar, and a marble basin, were the furniture. The cell was solitary, the owner being then at mass in the chapel of the monastery. Murray laid down his death-like burden on the monk's bed. He then ventured (believing, as it was to restore so pure a being to life, it could not be sacrilege) to throw some of the holy water upon his cousin's face; and by means of a little chalice which stood upon the altar, he poured some into her mouth. At last opening her eyes, she recognised the figure of her young kinsman leaning over her. The almost paralysed Halbert stood at her feet. 'Blessed Virgin! am I yet safe, and with my dear Andrew! Oh! I feared you were slain!' cried she, bursting into tears.

'Thank God, we are both safe,' answered he: 'comfort yourself, my beloved cousin! you are now on holy ground; this is the cell of the prior of St. Fillan. None, but the hand of an infidel, dare wrest you from this sanctuary.'

'But my father, and Lady Mar?' And again her tears flowed.

'The Countess, my gracious lady,' answered Halbert, 'since you could not be found in the castle, is allowed to accompany your father to Dumbarton castle, there to be treated with every respect, until De Valence receives further orders from King Edward.'

'But for Wallace!' cried she, 'ah, where are now the succours that were to be sent to him? And without succours, how can he, or you, dearest Andrew, rescue my father from this tyranny?'

'Do not despair,' replied Murray; 'look but at the banner you held fast, even while insensible; your own hands have engraven my answer—*God armeth the patriot!* Convinced of that, can you still fear for your father? I will join Wallace to-morrow. Your own fifty warriors await me at the bottom of Cartlane craigs; and if any treachery should be meditated against my uncle, that moment we will make the towers of Dumbarton shake to their foundation.'

Helen's reply was a deep sigh: she thought it might be Heaven's will that her father, like the good Lord Douglas, should fall a victim to royal revenge; and so sad were her forebodings, that she hardly dared to hope what the sanguine disposition of her cousin promised. Grimsby now came forward; and unloosing an iron box from under his arm, put it into the hands of Lord Murray.

'This fatal treasure,' said he, 'was committed to my care by the Earl, your uncle, to deliver to the prior of St. Fillan's.'

'When I informed Lord Mar of these measures against Wallace, he expressed a hope that your first detachment to his assistance, might, with yourself perhaps at its head, elude their vigilance, and join his friend. This discourse reminded him of the iron box. "It is in that closet," said his lordship, pointing to an opposite door; "you will find it beneath the little altar; before which I pay my daily duties to the Allwise Dispenser of the fates of men; else where would be my confidence now! take it hence, and buckle it to your side."

'I obeyed; and he then proceeded:—"There are two passages in this house, which lead to sanctuary. The one nearest to us, is the safest for you. A staircase from the closet you have just left, will lead you directly into the chapel. When there, hasten to the image of the Virgin, and slip aside the marble tablet on the back of the pedestal: it will admit you to a flight of steps; descend them, and at the bottom you will find a door, that will convey you into a range of cellars. Lift up the largest flag-stone in the second, and you will be conducted through a dark vault, to an iron door; draw the bolt, and remain in the cell it will open to you, till the owner enters. He is the prior of St. Fillan's, and a Murray. Give him this golden cross, which he well knows, as a mark you come from me; and say it is my request, that he assist you to gain the seashore. As for the iron box, tell him to preserve it as he would his life: and never to give it up, but to myself, my children, or to Sir William Wallace, its rightful master."'

'It was while we were yet in the chapel, that I heard De Valence, and Soulis, at high words in the court-yard. The former, in a loud voice, gave orders that as Lady Helen Mar could nowhere be found, the Earl and Countess, with their two infant children, should not be separated, but be conveyed as his prisoners to Dumbarton castle.'

'That is a comfort,' cried Helen; 'my father will then be consoled by the presence of his wife.'

'But very different would have been the case, madam, had you appeared,' rejoined the soldier: 'one of Lord de Valence's men told me, that Lord Soulis intended to have taken you, and the Countess, to Dun-glass castle, near Glasgow; while the sick Earl was to have been carried alone to Dumbarton, and detained in solitary confinement. Lord Soulis was in so dreadful a rage, when you could not be found, that he accused the English commander of having leagued with Lady Mar to deceive him. In the midst of this contention we descended into the vaults.'

Helen shuddered at the thought of how near she was to falling into the hands of so fierce a spirit. In his character, he united every quality which could render power formidable; combining prodigious bodily strength, with cruelty, dissimulation, and treachery. He was feared by the common people as a sorcerer; and avoided by the virtuous of his own rank, as an enemy to all public law, and the violator of every private tie. Helen Mar had twice refused his hand: first, during the contest for the kingdom, when his pretended claim to the crown was disallowed. She was then a mere child, hardly more than fourteen; but she rejected him with abhorrence. Though stung to the quick, at being denied the objects, both of his love and his ambition, at the same moment; he did not hesitate, at another period, to renew his offers to her. At the fall of Dunbar, when he again founded his uprise on the ruins of his country, as soon as he had repeated his oaths of fidelity to Edward, he hastened to Thirlestane, to throw himself a second time at the feet of Lady Helen. Her ripened judgment confirmed her youthful dislike of his ruffian qualities, and again he was rejected.

At this period, the door of the cell opened, and the prior entered from the cloisters—he started on seeing his room filled with strangers. Murray took off his helmet, and approached him. On recognising the son of his patron, the prior inquired his commands; and expressed some surprise that such a company, and above all, a lady, could have passed the convent-gate without his previous notice.

Murray pointed to the recess behind the altar; and then explained to the good priest the necessity which had compelled them to thus seek the protection of St. Fillan. 'Lady Helen,' continued he, 'must share your care, until Heaven empowers the Earl of Mar to reclaim his daughter, and adequately reward this holy church.'

The soldier then presented the cross, with the iron box; repeating the message that confided them also to his keeping.

The prior listened to these recitals with sorrowful attention. He had heard the noise of armed men advancing to the castle; but knowing that the Earl was making warlike preparations, he had no suspicion that these were other than the Bothwell soldiers. He took the box, and laying it on the altar, pressed the cross to his lips. 'The Earl of Mar shall find that fidelity here, which his faith in the church merits. That mysterious chest, to which you tell me so terrible a denunciation is annexed, shall be preserved as sacred as the relics of Saint Fillan.'

The sound of approaching trumpets; and, soon after, the clattering of horses, and the clang of armour, made an instantaneous silence in the cell. Helen looked fearfully at her cousin, and grasped his hand; Murray clasped his sword with a firmer hold. 'I will protect you with my life.' He spoke in a low tone, but the soldier heard him: 'There is no cause of alarm,' rejoined he; 'Lord de Valence, is only marching by, on his way to Dumbarton.'

'Alas, my poor father!' cried Helen, covering her face with her hands.

The venerable prior, pitying her affliction, knelt down by her: 'My daughter, be comforted,' said he, 'they dare not commit any violence on the Earl. King Edward too well understands his own interest, to allow even a long imprisonment to so popular a nobleman.' This assurance, assisted by the consolations of a firm trust in God, at length raised her head with a meek smile.

The prior, seeing her composed, recommended leaving her to rest. And Helen, comforted by holy meditations, allowing her cousin to depart, he led Murray and his companions into the convent library.

The march of De Valence from the castle, having proved that no suspicion of any of its late inhabitants being still in the neighbourhood, remained with its usurpers; Grimsby thought he might depart in safety; and next morning he begged permission of the prior to commence his journey. 'I am anxious to quit a land,' said he, 'where

my countrymen are committing violences which make me blush at the name of Englishman.'

Murray put a purse of gold into the soldier's hand, while the prior covered his armour with a pilgrim's gown. Grimsby, with a respectful bow, returned the gift: 'I cannot take money from you, my Lord. But bestow on me the sword at your side, and that I will preserve for ever.'

Murray took it off, and gave it to the soldier. 'Let us exchange, my brave friend!' said he: 'give me yours; and it shall be a memorial to me of having found virtue in an Englishman.'

Grimsby unlocked his rude weapon in a moment, and as he put the iron hilt into the young Scot's hand, a tear stood in his eye: 'When you raise this sword against my countrymen, think on Grimsby, a faithful, though humble soldier of the cross, and spare the blood of all who ask for mercy.'

Murray looked a gracious assent; for the tear of mercy was infectious. Without speaking, he gave the good soldier's hand a parting grasp; and with regret, that superior claims called so brave a man from his side, he saw him leave the monastery.[1]

The poor old harper, finding himself alone with Murray, again gave loose to his often-recapitulated griefs. Murray was consoling him with the assurance that he would set off for the mountains that very evening, when the prior returned to conduct Halbert to a cell appointed for his noviciate.

In the midst of this, the prior and his friends were startled by a shout; and soon after a tumult of voices, in which might be distinguished the cry of 'A gallows for the traitor!'

[1] Grimsby is recorded as having been originally in the service of the King of England. His after attachment to Wallace is also mentioned as a matter of fact. Most of the followers of the knight of Ellerslie, who are particularised in these volumes are named from authority.

'Our brave Englishman has fallen into their hands,' cried Murray, hastening towards the door.

'What would you do?' interrupted the prior, holding him. 'Your single arm could not save the soldier. The cross has more power; I will seek these violent men: meanwhile stay here, as you value the lives of all in the convent.'

The prior took the crucifix from the altar, and ordering the porter to throw open the great doors (near which the incessant shouting seemed to proceed); he appeared before a turbulent band of soldiers, who were dragging a man along, fast bound with their leathern belts. Blood, trickling from his face, fell on the hands of the ruthless wretches, who, with horrid yells, were threatening him with instant death.

The prior, raising the cross, rushed in amongst them; and, in the name of the blessed Son who died on that tree, bade them stand! The soldiers trembled before the holy majesty of his figure, and at his awful adjuration. The prior looked on the prisoner, but he did not see the dark locks of the Englishman; it was the yellow hair of Scotland that mingled with the blood on his forehead.

'Whither do you carry that wounded man?'

'To his death,' answered a surly fellow.

'What is his offence?'

'He is a traitor.'

'How has he proved it?'

'He is a Scot; and he belongs to the disloyal Lord of Mar. This bugle, with its crowned falcon, proves it,' added the Southron, holding up the very bugle which the Earl had sent by Halbert to Wallace; and which was ornamented with the crest of Mar wrought in gold.

'That this has been Lord Mar's,' replied the prior, 'there is no doubt; but may not this man have found it? Or may it not have been given to him by the Earl, before that chief incurred the displeasure of King Edward? Which of you would think it just to be made to die, because your friend was condemned to the scaffold? Unless you substantiate

your charge against this man, by a better proof than this bugle, his death would be a murder, which the Lord of life will requite, in the perdition of your souls.' As the father spoke, he again elevated the cross: the men turned pale.

'I am a minister of Christ,' continued he, 'and must be the friend of justice. Release, therefore, that wounded man to me. Before the altar of the Searcher of all hearts, he shall confess himself; and if I find that he is guilty unto death, I promise you by the holy St. Fillan, to release him to your commanding officer; and so let justice take its course. But if he prove innocent, I am the soldier of Christ; and no monarch on earth shall wrest his children from the protection of the church.'

While he spake, the men who held the prisoner, let go their hold; and the prior, stretching out his hand to him, gave him to a party of monks, to conduct into the convent. Then to convince the soldiers, that it was the man's life he sought to save, and not the spoil, he returned the golden bugle, and bade them depart in peace.

The good man, thinking it was now time to call the young lord of Bothwell; by a side-door from the chapter-house entered the library, where Murray was anxiously awaiting his return. On his entrance, the impatient youth eagerly exclaimed, 'Have you rescued him?'

'Grimsby, I hope, is far and safely on his journey,' answered the good priest; 'but the man those murderers were dragging to death, is in the chapter-house. Follow me, and he will give you news of Wallace.'

Murray gladly obeyed.

At sight of a Scottish knight in armour, the messenger of Wallace thought his prayers were answered, and that he saw before him the leader of the host which was to march to the preservation of his brave commander. Murray told him who he was; and learnt from him in return, that Wallace now considered himself in a state of siege; that the women, children, and old men, with him, had nothing to feed on but wild strawberries and birds' eggs, which they

found in the hollows of the rocks. 'To relieve them from such hard quarters, girded by a barrier of English soldiers,' continued the narrator, 'is his first wish; but that cannot be effected by our small number. However, he would make the attempt by a stratagem, could we be at all supported by succours from the Earl of Mar!'

'My uncle's means,' replied Murray, 'are for a time cut off; but mine shall be exerted to the utmost. Did you not meet, somewhere, a company of Scots to the number of fifty? I sent them off yesterday to seek your noble chief.'

'No,' rejoined the young man; 'I fear they have been taken by the enemy; for in my way to Sir William Wallace, not knowing the English were so close to this sanctuary, I was nearly seized myself. I had not the good fortune to be with him, when he struck the first blow for Scotland in the citadel of Lanark; but as soon as I heard the tale of his wrongs, and that he had retired in arms towards the Cartlane craigs, I determined to follow his fate. We had been companions in our boyish days, and friends after. He saved my life once, in swimming; and now that a formidable nation menaces his, I seek to repay the debt. For this purpose, a few nights ago I left my guardian's house by stealth, and sought my way to my friend. I found the banks of the Mouse occupied by the English; but exploring the most intricate passes, at last gained the bottom of the precipice on the top of which Wallace is encamped; and as I lay among the bushes, watching an opportunity to ascend, I perceived two English soldiers near me. They were in discourse, and I overheard them say, that besides Heselrigge himself, nearly two hundred of his garrison had fallen by the hand of Wallace's men in the contention at the castle: that the tidings were sent to Sir Richard Arnulff, the deputy-governor of Ayr; and he had despatched a thousand men to surround Cartlane craigs, spies having given notice that they were Sir William's strongholds; and the orders were, that he must be taken dead or

alive; while all his adherents, men and women, should receive no quarter.

'Such was the information I brought to my gallant friend, when in the dead of night I mounted the rock, and calling to the Scottish sentinel in Gaelic, gave him my name, and was allowed to enter that sacred spot. Wallace welcomed his faithful Ker, and soon unfolded his distress and his hopes. He told me of the famine that threatened his little garrison; of the constant watching, day and night, necessary to prevent a surprise. But in his extremity, he observed that one defile was thinly guarded by the enemy; probably because, as it lay at the bottom of a perpendicular angle of the rock, they thought it unattainable by the Scots. To this point, however, my dauntless friend turns his eyes. He would attempt it, could he procure a sufficient number of fresh men to cover the retreat of his exhausted few. For this purpose, as I had so lately explored the most hidden paths of the craigs, I volunteered to visit the Lord Mar, and to conduct, in safety, any succours he might send to our persecuted leader.'

'This,' continued Ker, 'was the errand on which I came to the Earl. Think then my horror, when in my journey I found redoubled legions hemming in the hills; and on advancing towards Bothwell Castle, was seized by a party of English, rifled, and declared an accomplice with that nobleman, who, they said, was condemned to lose his head!'

'Not so bad as that, my brave Ker,' cried Murray, a glow of indignation flushing his cheek; 'many a bull's head[1] shall frown in this land, on the Southron tables, before my uncle's neck gluts their axes! No true Scottish blood, I trust, will ever stain their scaffolds; for while we have arms to wield a sword, he must be a fool that grounds them on any other terms than freedom or death. We have cast our lives on the die; and Wallace's camp, or the *narrow house* must be our prize!'

[1] A bull's head presented at a feast, was a sign that some one of the company was immediately to be put to death.—(1809.)

'Noble youth!' exclaimed the prior, 'may the innocence which gives animation to your courage, continue its moving soul! They only are invincible, who are as ready to die as to live; and no one can be firm in that principle, whose exemplary life is not a happy preparation for the awful change.'

Murray bowed modestly to this pious encomium; and turning to Ker, informed him, that since he must abandon all hope of hearing any more of the fifty brave men his cousin Helen had sent to the craigs, he bethought him of applying to his uncle Sir John Murray, who dwelt hard by, on his estate at Drumshargard. 'It is small,' said he, 'and cannot afford many men; but still he may spare sufficient to effect the escape of our commander; and that for the present will be a host!'

To accomplish his design without delay, for promptitude is the earnest of success, and to avoid a surprise from the English lieutenant at Bothwell, (who, hearing of the rencontre before the castle, might choose to demand his men's prisoner,) Murray determined to take Ker with him; and, disguised as peasants, as soon as darkness should shroud their movements, proceed to Drumshargard.

CHAPTER VIII

DRUMSHARGARD

Lady Helen (who the night before had been removed into the quiet cell appointed for her) slept long and sweetly. Her exhausted frame found renovation; and she awoke with a heavenly calm at her heart. A cheering vision had visited her sleeping thoughts; and a trance of happy feelings absorbed her senses, while her hardly disengaged spirit still hovered over its fading images.

This dream seemed prophetic: 'Yes,' cried she, 'though thousands of Edward's soldiers surrounded my father and his friend, I should not despair. Thy life, O! noble Wallace,

was not given to be extinguished in an hour! Thy morn has hardly risen, the perfect day must come that is to develop thy greatness—that is to prove thee, (and, oh! gracious God, grant my prayer!) the glory of Scotland!'

Owing to the fervour of her apostrophe, she did not observe the door of the cell open, till the prior stood before her. After expressing his pleasure at the renovation in her countenance, he informed her of the departure of the English soldier; and of the alarm which he and Murray had sustained for his safety, by the adventure which had thrown a stranger from the craigs into their protection. At the mention of that now momentous spot, she blushed; the golden-haired warrior of her dream seemed ready to rise before her; and with a beating heart she prepared to hear some true but miraculous account of her father's rescue.

Unconscious of what was passing in her young and eager mind, the prior calmly proceeded to relate all that Ker had told of the dangerous extremity to which Wallace was reduced; and then closed his intelligence, by mentioning the attempt which her cousin meditated to save him.

Helen begged to see her cousin before he set off on his expedition. The prior withdrew, and within an hour after, Murray entered the apartment. Their conversation was long, and their parting full of an interest that dissolved them both into tears. 'When I see you again, my brave cousin, tell me that my father is free, and his preserver safe. Your own life, dear Andrew,' added she, as he pressed his cheek to hers, 'must always be precious to me.'

Murray hastily withdrew, and Helen was again alone.

The young chieftain and Ker covered their armour with shepherds' plaids; and having received a thousand blessings from the prior and Halbert, proceeded under shelter of the night, through the obscurest paths of the wood which divided Bothwell from Drumshargard.

It was still dark as midnight when Murray and his little company passed the heights above Drumshargard; and

took their rapid, though silent march towards the cliffs, which would conduct them to the more dangerous passes of the Cartlane craigs.

Two days passed drearily away to Helen. She could not expect tidings from her cousin in so short a time. No more happy dreams cheered her lonely hours; and anxiety to learn what might be the condition of the Earl and Countess, so possessed her, that visions of affright now disturbed both her waking and sleeping senses. Fancy showed them in irons, and in a dungeon; and sometimes she started in horror, thinking that perhaps at that moment, the assassin's steel was raised against the life of her father.

On the morning of the third day, when she was chiding herself for such rebellious despondence, her female attendant entered to say, that a friar was come to conduct her where she would see messengers from Lady Mar. Helen lingered not a moment, but giving her hand to the good father, was led by him into the library, where the prior was standing between two men in military habits. One wore English armour, with his visor closed; the other, a knight, was in tartans. The Scot presented her with a signet, set in gold. Helen looked on it, and immediately recognised the same that her stepmother always used.

The Scottish knight was preparing to address her, when the prior interrupted him, and taking Lady Helen's hand, made her seat herself. 'Compose yourself for a few minutes,' said he; 'this transitory life hourly brings forward events to teach us to be calm, and to resign our wishes and our wills to the Lord of all things.'

Helen looked fearfully in his face. 'Some evil tidings are to be told me.' The blood left her lips, it seemed leaving her heart also. The prior, full of compassion, hesitated to speak. The Scot abruptly answered her:—

'Be not alarmed, lady, your parents have fallen into humane hands. I am sent, under the command of this noble Southron knight, to conduct you to them.'

'Then my father lives! They are safe!' cried she, in a transport of joy, and bursting into tears.

'He yet lives,' returned the officer; 'but his wounds opening afresh, and the fatigues of his journey, have so exhausted him, that Lord Aymer de Valence has granted the prayers of the Countess, and we come to take you to receive his last blessing.'

Lady Helen dropped on one knee before the prior. He crossed his hands over her head—he looked up to heaven—his lips moved—then pausing a moment—'Go,' said he, 'and may the angels which guard innocence minister to your sorrows and lead you into peace!'

Helen bowed, and followed the prior out of the cell. At the end of the cloister she bade farewell to Halbert. Before the great gates stood the knights with their attendants. She once more kissed the crucifix held by the prior, and giving her hand to the Scot, was placed by him on a horse richly caparisoned. He sprung on another himself: while the English officer, who was already mounted drawing up to her, she pulled down her veil; and all bowing to the holy brotherhood at the porch, rode off at a gentle pace.

A long stretch of woods, which spread before the monastery, and screened the back of Bothwell castle from being discernible on that side of the Clyde, lay before them. Through this green labyrinth they pursued their way, till they crossed the river.

'Time wears!' exclaimed the Scot to his companion; 'we must push on.' The English knight nodded, and set his spurs into his steed. The whole troop now fell into a rapid trot. The banks of the Avon opened into a hundred beautiful seclusions, which, intersecting the deep sides of the river with umbrageous shades, and green hillocks, seemed to shut it from the world. Helen in vain looked for the distant towers of Dumbarton castle, marking the horizon: no horizon appeared, but ranges of rocks and wooded precipices.

A sweet breeze played through the valley, and revived her harassed frame. She put aside her veil to enjoy its freshness, and saw that the knights turned their horses' heads into one of the obscurest mountain defiles. She started at its depth, and at the gloom which involved its extremity. 'It is our nearest path,' said the Scot: Helen made no reply, but turning her steed also, followed him; there being room for only one at a time to ride along the narrow margin of the river that flowed at its base. The Englishman, whose voice she had not yet heard, and his attendants, followed likewise in file; and with difficulty the horses could make their way through the thicket which interlaced the pathway; so confined, indeed, that it rather seemed a cleft made by an earthquake in the mountain, than a road for the use of man.

When they had been employed for an hour in breaking their way through this trackless glen, they came to a wider space, where other and broader ravines opened before them. The Scot, taking a pass to the right, raised his bugle, and blew so sudden a blast that the horse on which Lady Helen sat took fright, and began to plunge and rear, to the evident hazard of throwing her into the stream. Some of the dismounted men, seeing her danger, seized the horse by the bridle; while the English knight, extricating her from the saddle, carried her through some clustering bushes, into a cave, and laid her at the feet of an armed man.

Terrified at this extraordinary action, she started up with a piercing shriek, but was at that moment enveloped in the arms of the stranger; while a loud shout of exultation resounded from the Scot who stood at the entrance. It was echoed from without. There was horror in every sound. 'Blessed Virgin, protect me!' cried she, striving to break from the fierce grasp that held her. 'Where am I?' looking wildly at the two men who had brought her: 'Why am I not taken to my father?'

She received no answer; and both the Scot and the Englishman left the place. The stranger still held her

locked in a gripe that seemed of iron. In vain she struggled, in vain she shrieked, in vain she called on earth and heaven for assistance; she was held, and still he kept silence. Exhausted with terror, and fruitless attempts for release, she put her hands together, and in a calmer tone exclaimed, 'If you have honour or humanity in your heart, release me! I am an unprotected woman, praying for your mercy; withhold it not, for the sake of heaven, and your own soul!'

'Kneel to me then, thou syren!' cried the warrior, with fierceness. As he spoke, he threw the tender knees of Lady Helen upon the rocky floor. His voice echoed terribly in her ears; but obeying him, 'Free me,' cried she, 'for the sake of my dying father!'

'Never, till I have had my revenge!'

At this dreadful denunciation she shuddered to the soul, but yet she spoke: 'Surely I am mistaken for some one else! Oh, how can I have offended any man, to incur so cruel an outrage?'

The warrior burst into a satanic laugh, and throwing up his visor, 'Behold me, Helen!' cried he, grasping her clasped hands with a horrible force. 'My hour is come!'

At the sight of the dreadful face of Soulis, she comprehended all her danger, and with supernatural strength wresting her hands from his hold, she burst through the bushes out of the cave. Her betrayers stood at the entrance, and catching her in their arms, brought her back to their lord. But it was an insensible form they now laid before him: overcome with horror her senses had fled. Short was this suspension from misery; water was thrown on her face, and she awoke to recollection, lying on the bosom of her enemy. Again she struggled, again her cries echoed from side to side of the cavern. 'Peace!' cried the monster: 'you cannot escape; you are now mine for ever! Twice you refused to be my wife: you dared to despise my love and my power: now you shall feel my hatred and my revenge!'

'Kill me!' cried the distracted Helen; 'kill me, and I will bless you!'

'That would be a poor vengeance,' cried he: 'you must be humbled, proud minion, you must learn to fawn on me for a smile; to woo, as my slave, for one of those caresses you spurned to receive as my wife.' As he spoke, he strained her to his breast, with the contending expressions of passion and revenge glaring in his eyes. Helen shrieked at the pollution of his lips; and as he more fiercely held her, her hand struck against the hilt of his dagger. In a moment she drew it; and armed with the strength of outraged innocence, unwitting whether it gave death or not, only hoping it would release her, she struck it into his side. All was the action of an instant. While as instantaneously he caught her wrist, and exclaiming, 'Damnable traitress!' dashed her from him, stunned, and motionless, to the ground.

The weapon had not penetrated far. But the sight of his blood, drawn by the hand of a woman, incensed the raging Soulis. He called aloud on Macgregor. The two men, who yet stood without the cave, re-entered. They started when they saw a dagger in his hand, and Helen, lying apparently lifeless, with blood sprinkled on her garments.

Macgregor, who had personated the Scottish knight, in a tremulous voice asked why he had killed the lady?

Soulis frowned: 'Here!' cried he, throwing open his vest; 'this wound, that beautiful fiend you so piteously look upon, aimed at my life!'

'My Lord,' said the other man, who had heard her shrieks, 'I expected different treatment for the Earl of Mar's daughter.'

'Base Scot!' returned Soulis, 'when you brought a woman into these wilds to me, you had no right to expect I should use her otherwise than as I pleased, and you, as the servile minister of my pleasures.'

'This language, Lord Soulis!' rejoined the man much agitated: 'but you mistook me—I meant not to reproach.'

'Tis well you did not;' and turning from him with contempt, he listened to Macgregor: who, stooping towards the inanimate Helen, observed that her pulse beat. 'Fool!' returned Soulis, 'did you think I would so rashly throw away what I have been at such pains to gain? Call your wife: she knows how to teach these minions submission to my will.'

The man obeyed; and while his companion, by the command of Soulis, bound a fillet round the bleeding forehead of Helen, cut by the flints: the chief brought two chains, and fastening them to her wrists and ankles, exclaimed with brutal triumph, while he locked them on: 'There, my haughty damsel! flatter not thyself that the arms of Soulis shall be thine only fetters.'

Macgregor's wife entered, and promised to obey all her lord's injunctions. When she was left alone with the breathless body of Helen, water, and a few cordial drops, which she poured into the unhappy lady's mouth, soon recalled her wretched senses. On opening her eyes, the sight of one of her own sex inspired her with some hope; but attempting to stretch out her hands in supplication, she was horror-struck at finding them fastened, and at the clink of the chains which bound her. 'Why am I thus?' demanded she of the woman; but suddenly recollecting having attempted to pierce Soulis with his own dagger, and now supposing she had slain him, she added, 'Is Lord Soulis killed?'

'No,' replied the woman; 'my husband says he is but slightly hurt; and surely your fair face belies your heart, if you could intend the death of so brave and loving a lord!'

'You then belong to him?' cried the wretched Helen, wringing her hands. 'What will be my unhappy fate! Virgin of heaven, take me to thyself!'

'Heaven forbid!' cried the woman, 'that you should pray against being the favourite lady of our noble chief! Many are the scores around Hermitage castle, who would come

hither on their hands and knees to arrive at that happiness.'

'Happiness!' cried Lady Helen, in anguish of spirit: 'It can visit me no more, till I am restored to my father, till I am released from the power of Soulis. Give me liberty,' continued she, wildly grasping the arm of the woman. 'Assist me to escape, and half the wealth of the Earl of Mar shall be your reward.'

'Alas!' returned the woman; 'my Lord would burn me on the spot, and murder my husband, did he think I even listened to such a project. No, lady; you never will see your father more; for none who so enter my Lord's Hermitage, ever wish to come out again.'

'The Hermitage!' cried Helen, in augmented horror. 'Oh, Father of mercy! never let me live to enter those accursed walls!'

'They are frightful enough, to be sure,' returned the woman; 'but you, gentle lady, will be princess there; and in all things commanding the kingly heart of its lord, have rather cause to bless than to curse the castle of Soulis.'

'Himself, and all that bears his name, are accursed to me,' returned Helen: 'his love is my abomination, his hatred my dread. Pity me, kind creature; and if you have a daughter whose honour is dear to your prayers, think you see her in me, and have compassion on me. My life is in your hands; for I swear before the throne of Almighty Purity, that Soulis shall see me die, rather than dishonoured!'

'Poor young soul!' cried the woman, looking at her frantic gestures with commiseration; 'I would pity you if I durst; but I repeat, my life, and my husband's, and my children, who are now near Hermitage, would all be sacrificed to the rage of Lord Soulis. You must be content to submit to his will.' Helen closed her hands over her face in mute despair, and the woman went on: 'And as for the matter of your making such lamentations about

your father, if he be as little your friend as your mother is, you have not much cause to grieve on that score.'

Helen started. 'My mother! what of her!—Speak! tell me! It was indeed her signet that betrayed me into these horrors. She cannot have consented—Oh, no! some villains!—speak! tell me what you would say of Lady Mar?'

Regardless of the terrible emotion which now shook the frame of her auditor, the woman coolly replied, she had heard from her husband, who was the confidential servant of Lord Soulis, that it was to Lady Mar he owed the knowledge of Helen being at Bothwell. The Countess had written a letter to her cousin, Lord Buchan; who being a sworn friend of England, was then with Lord de Valence at Dumbarton. In this epistle, she intimated 'her wish, that Lord Buchan would devise a plan to surprise Bothwell castle the ensuing day, to prevent the departure of its armed vassals, then preparing to march to the support of the outlaw Sir William Wallace, who, with his band of robbers, was lurking about the caverns of the Cartlane craigs.'

When this letter arrived, Lord Soulis was at dinner with the other lords; and Buchan laying it before De Valence, they all consulted what was best to be done. Lady Mar begged her cousin not to appear in the affair himself, that she might escape the suspicions of her lord; who, she strongly declared, was not arming his vassals for any disloyal disposition towards the King of England, but solely at the instigations of Wallace; to whom he romantically considered himself bound by the ties of gratitude. As she gave this information, she hoped that no attainder would fall upon her husband. And to keep the transaction as close as possible, she proposed that the Lord Soulis, who she understood was then at Dumbarton, should take the command of two or three thousand troops, and, marching to Bothwell next morning, seize the few hundred armed Scots who were there, ready to proceed to the

mountains. She ended by saying, that her daughter-in-law was in the castle; which she hoped would be an inducement to Soulis to ensure the Earl of Mar's safety for the sake of her hand as his reward.

The greatest part of Lady Mar's injunctions could not be attended to, as Lord de Valence, as well as Soulis, was made privy to the secret. The English nobleman declared, that he should not do his duty to his King, if he did not head the force that went to quell so dangerous a conspiracy; and Soulis, eager to go at any rate, joyfully accepted the honour of being his companion. Lord Buchan was easily persuaded to the seizure of the Earl's person; as De Valence flattered him, that the King would endow him with the Mar estates, which must now be confiscated. Helen groaned at the latter part of this narration; but the woman, without noticing it, proceeded to relate how, when the party had executed their design at Bothwell castle, she was to have been taken by Soulis to his castle near Glasgow. But on that wily Scot not finding her, he conceived the suspicion that Lord de Valence had prevailed on the Countess to give her up to him. He observed, that the woman who could be induced to betray her daughter to one man, would easily be bribed to repeat the crime to another; and under this impression he accused the English nobleman of treachery. De Valence denied it vehemently; a quarrel ensued; and Soulis departed with a few of his followers, giving out that he was retiring in high indignation to Dun-glass. But the fact was, he lurked about in Bothwell wood; and from its recesses, saw Cressingham's lieutenant march by, to take possession of the castle in the King's name. A deserter from this troop, fell in with Lord Soulis' company; and flying to him for protection, a long private conversation took place between them. At this period, one of the spies who had been left by that chief in quest of news, returned with a female tenant of St. Fillan's, whom he had seduced from her home. She told Lord Soulis, all he wanted to know;

informing him that a beautiful young lady, who could be no other than Lady Helen Mar, was concealed in that convent.

On this information he conversed a long time with the stranger from Cressingham's detachment. And determining on carrying off Helen immediately to Hermitage, that the distance of Teviotdale might render a rescue less probable, he laid his plan accordingly. 'In consequence,' continued the woman, 'my husband, and the stranger; the one habited as a Scottish, and the other as an English knight, (for my lord being ever on some wild prank, has always a chest of strange dresses with him,) set out for St. Fillan's; taking with them the signet which your mother had sent with her letter to the Earl her cousin. They hoped such a pledge of their truth, would ensure them credit. You know the tale they invented; and its success proves my lord to be no bad contriver.'

CHAPTER IX

THE PENTLAND HILLS

Helen listened with astonishment and grief, to this too probable story of her stepmother's ill-judged tenderness, or cruel treachery, and remembering the threats which had escaped that lady in their last conversation, she saw no reason to doubt, what so clearly explained the before inexplicable seizure of her father, the betraying of Wallace, and her own present calamity.

'You do not answer me,' rejoined the woman; 'but if you think I don't say true, Lord Soulis himself will assure you of the fact.'

'Alas, no!' returned Helen, profoundly sighing, 'I believe it too well. I see the depth of the misery into which I am plunged. And yet,' cried she, recollecting the imposition the men had put upon her; 'yet, I shall not be wholly so, if my father lives, and was not in the extremity they told me of!'

'If that thought gives you comfort, retain it;' returned the woman: 'the whole story of the Earl's illness, was an invention, to bring you at so short notice from the protection of the prior.'

'I thank Thee, gracious Providence, for this comfort!' exclaimed Helen: 'it inspires me with redoubled trust in Thee.'

Margery shook her head. 'Ah, poor victim (thought she), how vain is thy devotion!' But she had not time to say so, for her husband, and the deserter from Cressingham, re-entered the cave. Helen, afraid that it was Soulis, started up. The stranger proceeded to lift her in his arms: she struggled, and in the violence of her action, struck his beaver; it opened, and discovered a pale and stern countenance, with a large scar across his jaw; this mark of contest, and the gloomy scowl of his eyes, made Helen rush towards the woman for protection. The man hastily closed his helmet, and speaking through the clasped steel, for the first time she heard his voice, which sounded hollow and decisive: he bade her prepare to accompany Lord Soulis in a journey to the south.

Helen looked at her shackled arms, and despairing of effecting her escape by any effort of her own, she thought that gaining time might be some advantage; and allowing the man to take her hand, while Macgregor supported her on the other side, they led her out of the cave. She observed the latter smile significantly at his wife. 'Oh!' cried she, 'to what am I betrayed! Unhand me—leave me!' Almost fainting with dread, she leaned against the arm of the stranger.

Thunder now pealed over her head, and lightning shot across the mountains. She looked up: 'Merciful heaven!' cried she, in a voice of deep horror; 'send down thy bolt on me!' At that moment Soulis, mounted on his steed, approached, and ordered her to be put into the litter. Incapable of contending with the numbers which surrounded her, she allowed them to execute their master's

commands. Macgregor's wife was set on a pillion behind him; and Soulis giving the word, they all marched on at a rapid pace. In a few hours, having cleared the shady valleys of the Clyde, they entered the long and barren tracts of the Leadhill moors.

A dismal hue overspread the country; the thunder yet roared in distant peals, and the lightning came down in such vast sheets, that the carriers were often obliged to set down their burden, and cover their eyes to regain their sight. A shrill wind pierced the slight covering of the litter, and blowing it aside, discovered at intervals the rough outlines of the distant hills visible through the mist; or the gleaming of some wandering water, as it glided away over the cheerless waste.

'All is desolation, like myself!' thought Helen; but neither the cold wind, nor the rain, now drifting into her vehicle, occasioned her any sensation. It is only when the mind is at ease, that the body is delicate; all within her was too expectant of mental horrors, to notice the casual inconveniences of season or situation.

The cavalcade with difficulty mounted the steps of a mountainous hill, where the storm raged so turbulently, that the men who carried the litter stopped, and told their lord, it would be impossible to proceed in the approaching darkness; they conjured him to look at the perpendicular rocks, rendered indistinct by the gathering mist; to observe the overwhelming gusts of the tempest; and then judge whether they dare venture with the litter on so dangerous a pathway, made slippery by descending rain!

To halt, in such a spot, seemed to Soulis as unsafe as to proceed. 'We shall not be better off,' answered he, 'should we attempt to return: precipices lie on either side; and to stand still would be equally perilous: the torrents from the heights increase so rapidly, there is every chance of our being swept away, should we remain exposed to their stream.'

Helen looked at these sublime cascades with a calm welcome, as they poured from the hills, and flung their spray upon the roof of her vehicle. She hailed her release in the death they menaced; and far from being intimidated at the prospect, cast a resigned, and even wistful glance, into the swelling lake beneath, under whose waves she expected soon to sleep.

On the remonstrance of their master, the men resumed their pace; and after hard contention with the storm, they gained the summit of the west side of the mountain; and were descending its eastern brow, when the shades of night closed in upon them. Looking down into the black chaos, on the brink of which they must pass along, they once more protested they could not advance a foot, until the dawn should give them some security.

At this declaration, which Soulis saw could not now be disputed, he ordered the troop to halt under the shelter of a projecting rock. Its huge arch overhung the ledge that formed the road, while the deep gulf at his feet, by the roaring of its waters, proclaimed itself the receptacle of those cataracts, which rush tremendous from the ever-streaming Pentland hills.

Soulis dismounted. The men set down the litter, and removed to a distance as he approached. He opened one of the curtains, and throwing himself beside the exhausted, but watchful Helen, clasped his arms roughly about her, and exclaimed, 'Sweet minion, I must pillow on your bosom till the morn awakes!' His brutal lips were again riveted to her cheek. Ten thousand strengths seemed then to heave him from her heart; and struggling with a power that amazed even herself, she threw him from her; and holding him off with her shackled arms, her shrieks again pierced the heavens.

'Scream thy soul away, poor fool!' exclaimed Soulis, seizing her fiercely in his arms; 'for thou art now so surely mine, that heaven itself cannot deprive me!'

The Rescue of Helen from Soulis

At that moment her couch was shaken by a sudden shock, and in the next she was covered with the blood of Soulis. A stroke from an unseen arm had reached him, and starting on his feet, a fearful battle of swords took place over the prostrate Helen.

One of the men, out of the numbers who hastened to the assistance of their master, fell dead on her body; while the chief himself, sorely wounded, and breathing revenge and blasphemy, was forced off by the survivors. 'Where do you carry me, villains?' cried he. 'Separate me not from the vengeance I will yet hurl on that demon who has robbed me of my victim, or ye shall die a death more horrible than hell can inflict!' He raved; but more unheeded than the tempest. Terrified that the spirits of darkness were indeed their pursuers, in spite of his reiterated threats, the men carried him to a distant hollow in the rocks; and laid him down, now insensible from loss of blood. One or two of the most desperate, returned to see what was become of Lady Helen; well aware that if they could regain her, their master would be satisfied: but, on the reverse, should she be lost, the whole troop knew their fate would be some merciless punishment.

Macgregor, and the deserter of Cressingham, were the first who reached the spot where the lady had been left; with horror they found the litter, but not herself. She was gone. But whether carried off by the mysterious arm which had felled their lord, or she had thrown herself into the foaming gulf beneath, they could not determine. They decided, however, the latter should be their report to Soulis; knowing he would rather believe the object of his passions had perished, than that she had escaped his toils.

Almost stupefied with consternation, they returned to repeat this tale to their furious lord; who, on having his wounds stanched, had recovered from his swoon. On hearing that the beautiful creature, he had so lately

believed his own beyond the power of fate; that *his property*, as he called her, the devoted slave of his will, the mistress of his destiny, was lost to him for ever! swallowed up in the whelming wave! he became frantic. There was desperation in every word. He raved; tore up the earth like a wild beast; and, foaming at the mouth, dashed the wife of Macgregor from him, as she approached with a fresh balsam for his wounds. 'Off, scum of a damned sex!' cried he: 'Where is she, whom I entrusted to thy care?'

'My lord,' answered the affrighted woman, 'you know best. You terrified the poor young creature. You forced yourself into her litter, and can you wonder—'

'That I should force you to perdition! execrable witch,' cried he, 'that knew no better how to prepare a slave to receive her lord!' As he spoke, he struck her again; but it was with his gauntlet hand, and the eyes of the unfortunate woman opened no more. The blow fell on her temple, and a motionless corpse lay before him.

'My wife!' cried the poor Macgregor, putting his trembling arms about her neck: 'Oh, my lord, how have I deserved this? You have slain her!'

'Suppose I have!' returned the chief with a cold scorn; 'she was old and ugly; and could you recover Helen, you should cull Hermitage, for a substitute for this prating beldam.'

Macgregor made no reply, but feeling in his heart, that he 'who sows the wind, must reap the whirlwind;' that such were the rewards from villainy, to its vile instruments; he could not but say to himself, 'I have deserved it of my God, but not of thee!' and sobbing over the remains of his equally criminal wife, by the assistance of his comrades he removed her from the now hated presence of his lord.

Meanwhile, the Lady Helen, hardly rational from the horror and hope that agitated her, extricated herself from the dead body; and in her eagerness to escape, would certainly have fallen over the precipice, had not the same gallant arm which had covered her persecutor with

wounds, caught her as she sprang from the litter. 'Fear not, lady,' exclaimed a gentle voice: 'you are under the protection of a Scottish knight.'

There was a kindness in the sound, that seemed to proclaim the speaker to be of her own kindred; she felt as if suddenly rescued by a brother; and dropping her head on his bosom, a shower of grateful tears relieved her heart, and prevented her fainting. Aware that no time was to be lost; that the enemy might soon be on him again, he clasped her in his arms; and, with the activity of a mountain deer, crossed two rushing streams; leaping from rock to rock, even under the foam of their flood; and then treading, with a light and steady step, an alpine bridge of one single tree, which arched the cataract below, he reached the opposite side; where, spreading his plaid upon the rock, he laid the trembling Helen upon it. Then softly breathing his bugle, in a moment he was surrounded by a number of men, whose rough gratulations might have re-awakened the alarm of Helen, had she not still heard his voice.

He directed the men to take their axes, and cut away, on their side of the fall, the tree which arched it. It was probable the villain he had just assailed, or his followers, might pursue him; and he thought it prudent to demolish the bridge.

The men obeyed, and the warrior returned to his fair charge. It was raining fast; and fearful of farther exposing her to the inclemencies of the night, he proposed leading her to shelter. 'There is a hermit's cell on the northern side of this mountain. I will conduct you thither in the morning, as to the securest asylum; but meanwhile we must seek a nearer refuge.'

'Anywhere, sir, with honour, my guide,' answered Helen, timidly.

'You are safe with me, lady,' returned he, 'as in the arms of the Virgin. I am a man who can now have no joy in womankind, but when as a brother I protect them.

Whoever you are, confide in me, and you shall not be betrayed.'

Helen confidently gave him her hand, and strove to rise; but at the first attempt, the shackles piercing her ankles, she sunk again to the ground. The cold iron on her wrists touched the hand of her preserver. He now recollected his surprise on hearing the clank of chains, when carrying her over the bridge: 'Who,' inquired he, 'could have done this unmanly deed?'

'The wretch from whom you rescued me; to prevent my escape from a captivity worse than death.'

While she spoke, he wrenched open the manacles from her wrists and ankles, and threw them over the precipice, and led her silently down the windings of the declivity. Having proceeded with caution, they descended into a little wooded dell, and soon approached the half-standing remains of what had once been a shepherd's hut.

'This,' said the knight, as they entered, 'was the habitation of a good old man, who fed his flock on these mountains; but a band of Southron soldiers forced his only daughter from him; and, plundering his little abode, drove him out upon the waste. He perished the same night, by grief, and the inclemencies of the weather. His son, a brave youth, was left for dead by his sister's ravishers; but I found him in this dreary solitude; and he told me the too general story, of his wounds and his despair. Indeed, lady, when I heard your shrieks from the opposite side of the chasm, I thought they might proceed from this poor boy's sister, and I flew to restore them to each other.'

Helen shuddered, as he related a tale so nearly resembling her own; and trembling with weakness, and horror of what might have been her fate, had she not been rescued by this gallant stranger, she sunk exhausted upon a turf seat. The chief still held her hand. It was very cold, and he called to his men to seek fuel to make a fire. While his messengers were exploring the crannies of the rocks, for

dried leaves and sticks, Helen, totally overcome, leaned almost motionless against the wall of the hut. Finding, by her shortening breath, that she was fainting, the knight took her in his arms, and supporting her on his breast, chafed her hands and her forehead. His efforts were vain: she seemed to have ceased to breathe; hardly a pulse moved her heart. Alarmed at such signs of death, he spoke to one of his men, who remained in the hut.

The man answered his master's inquiry, by putting a flask into his hand. The knight poured some of its contents into her mouth. Her streaming locks wetted his cheek. 'Poor lady!' said he, 'she will perish in these forlorn regions, where neither warmth nor nourishment can be found.'

To his glad welcome, several of his men soon after entered with a quantity of withered boughs, which they had found in the fissures of the rock at some distance. With these a fire was speedily kindled; and its blaze diffusing comfort through the chamber, he had the satisfaction of hearing a sigh from the breast of his charge. Her head still leaned on his bosom, when she opened her eyes. The light shone full on her face.

'Lady,' said he, 'I bless God you are revived.' Her delicacy shrunk at the situation in which she found herself, and raising herself, though feebly, she thanked him, and requested a little water. It was given to her. She drank some; and would have met the fixed and compassionate gaze of the knight, had not weakness cast such a film before her eyes that she scarcely saw anything. Being still languid, she leaned her head on the turf seat. Her face was pale as marble, and her long hair, saturated with wet, by its darkness made her look of a more deadly hue.

'Death! how lovely canst thou be!' sighed the knight to himself—he even groaned. Helen started, and looked around her with alarm. 'Fear not,' said he, 'I only dreaded your pale looks; but you revive, and will yet bless all that are dear to you. Suffer me, sweet lady, to drain

the dangerous wet from these tresses?' He took hold of them as he spoke. She saw the water running from her hair over his hands, and allowing his kind request, he continued wiping her glossy locks with his scarf, till, exhausted by fatigue, she gradually sunk into a profound sleep.

Dawn had penetrated the ruined walls of the hut, before Lady Helen awoke. But when she did, she was refreshed; and opening her eyes—hardly conscious where she was, or whether all that floated in her memory were not the departing vapours of a frightful dream—she turned her head, and fixed them upon the figure of the knight, who was seated near her. His noble air, and the pensive expression of his fine features, struck like a spell upon her gathering recollections; she at once remembered all she had suffered, all that she owed to him. She moved. Her preserver turned his eyes towards her: seeing she was awake, he rose from the side of the dying embers, he had sedulously kept alive during her slumber, and expressed his hopes that she felt restored. She returned him a grateful reply, in the affirmative; and he quitted her, to rouse his men for their journey to the hermit's cell.

When he re-entered, he found Helen braiding up the fine hair which had so lately been scattered by the elements. She would have risen at his approach, but he seated himself on a stone at her feet. 'We shall be detained here a few minutes longer,' said he: 'I have ordered my men to make a litter of crossed branches, to bear you on their shoulders. The venerable man, who inhabits there, will protect you, until he can summon your family, or friends, to receive his charge.'

Helen gathered her mantle about her: and the knight throwing his scarf over her head,—it had no other covering,—she gave him her hand, and he led her out of the hut to the side of the bier. It was overlaid with the men's plaids. The knight placed her on it; and the carriers raising it on their shoulders, her deliverer led the way, and they took their course down the mountain.

CHAPTER X

THE GLEN OF STONES

They proceeded in silence through the curvings of the dell till it opened into a hazardous path along the top of a far-extending cliff, which overhung and clasped in the western side of a deep loch.

As they advanced, the vale gradually narrowed, and at last shut them within an immense chasm, which seemed to have been cleft at its towering summit, to admit a few beams of light to the desert below. A dark river flowed along, amid which the bases of the mountains showed their union, by the mingling of many a rugged cliff, projecting upwards in a variety of strange and hideous forms. The men who carried Helen, with some difficulty found a safe footing. However, after frequent rests, and unremitted caution, they at last extricated themselves from the most intricate path; and more lightly followed their chief, into a less gloomy part of this chaos of nature. The knight stopped, and approaching the bier, told Helen they had arrived at the end of their journey.

'In the heart of that cliff,' said he, 'is the hermit's cell; a desolate shelter, but a safe one. Old age and poverty, hold no temptations to the enemies of Scotland.'

As he spoke, the venerable man, who had heard voices beneath, appeared on the rock; and while his tall and majestic figure, clad in grey, moved forward, and his silver beard flowed from his saintly countenance upon the air, he seemed the bard of Morven, issuing from his cave of shells, to bid a hero's welcome to the young and warlike Oscar.

'Bless thee, my son,' cried he, as he descended: 'what good or evil accident hath returned thee so soon to these solitudes?'

The knight briefly related the circumstances of Helen's rescue, and that he had brought her to share his asylum.

The hermit took her by the hand, and graciously promised her every service in his power. He then preceded the knight, whose firmer arm supported her up the rock, to the outer apartment of the cell.

A sacred awe struck her, as she entered this place, dedicated wholly to God. She bowed, and crossed herself. The hermit, observing her devotion, blessed her, and bade her welcome to the abode of peace.

'Here, daughter,' said he, 'has one son of persecuted Scotland found a refuge. There is nought alluring in these wilds, to attract the spoiler. The green herb is all the food they afford, and the limpid water their best beverage.'

The knight turned to Helen: 'Farewell, sweet lady!' said he. She trembled at the words, and hardly conscious of what she did, held out her hand to him. He took it, and drew it towards his lips, but checking himself, he only pressed it, while in a mournful voice he added, 'In your prayer, sometimes remember the most desolate of men!'

A mist seemed to pass over the eyes of Lady Helen. She felt as if on the point of losing something most precious to her: 'My prayers for my own preserver, and for my father's,' cried she, in an agitated voice, 'shall ever be mingled. And, if ever it be safe to remember me—should Heaven indeed *arm the patriot's hand*—then my father may be proud to know and to thank the brave deliverer of his child.'

The knight paused, and looked with animation upon her: 'Then your father is in arms, and against the tyrant! Tell me where, and you see before you a man who is ready to join him, and to lay down his life in the just cause!'

At this vehement declaration, Lady Helen's full heart overflowed, and she burst into tears. He drew towards her, and in a moderated voice continued: 'My men, though few, are brave. They are devoted to their country, and are willing for her sake to follow me to victory or to death. As I am a knight, I am sworn to defend the cause

of right; and where shall I so justly find it, as on the side of bleeding, wasted Scotland? How shall I so well pursue my career, as in the defence of her injured sons? Speak, gentle lady! trust me with your noble father's name, and he shall not have cause to blame the confidence you repose in a true though wandering Scot.'

'My father,' replied Helen, weeping afresh, 'is not where your generous services can reach him. Two brave chiefs, one a kinsman of my own, and the other his friend, are now colleagued to free him. If they fail, my whole house falls in blood!

'Not so, lady,' replied he: 'the sword is now raised in Scotland, that cannot be laid down, till it be broken, or have conquered. All have suffered by Edward; the powerful, banished into other countries, that their wealth might reward foreign mercenaries; the poor, driven into the waste, that the meanest Southron might share the spoil! Where all have suffered, all must be ready to avenge; and when a whole people take up arms to regain their rights, what force can prevent restitution? God is with them!'

'So I felt,' returned Helen, 'while I had not yet seen the horrors of the contest. While my father commanded in Bothwell castle, and was sending out auxiliaries to the patriot chief, I too felt nothing but the inspiration which led them on, and saw nothing but the victory which must crown so just a cause. But now, when all whom my father commanded, are slain or carried away by the enemy; when he is himself a prisoner, and awaiting the sentence of the tyrant he opposed; when the gallant Wallace, instead of being able to hasten to his rescue, is besieged by a numberless host; hope almost dies within me; and I fear that whoever may be fated to free Scotland, my beloved father, and those belonging to him, are first to be made a sacrifice.'

She turned pale as she spoke; and the stranger resumed: 'No, lady: if there be that virtue in Scotland, which can

alone deserve freedom, it will be achieved. I am an inconsiderable man: but relying on the God of Justice, I promise you your father's liberty! and let his freedom be a pledge to you for that of your country. I now go to rouse a few brave spirits to arms.'

While he yet spoke, the hermit re-entered from the inner cell, supporting a youth on his arm. At sight of the knight, who held out his hand to him, he dropped on his knees, and burst into tears. 'Do you then leave me?' cried he; 'am I not to serve my preserver?'

Helen rose in strange surprise: there was something in the feelings of the boy, that was infectious; and while her own heart beat violently, she looked first on his emaciated figure, and then at the noble contour of the knight, 'where every god had seemed to set his seal.' His beaming eyes appeared the very fountains of consolation; his cheek was bright with generous emotions; and turning from the suppliant boy to Helen; 'Rise,' said he to the youth, 'and behold in this lady the object of the service to which I appoint you. You will soon, I hope, be sufficiently recovered, to attend upon her wishes as you would upon mine. Be her servant and her guard; and when we meet again, as she will then be under the protection of her father, if you do not prefer so gentle a service before the rougher one of war, I will resume you to myself.'

The youth, who had obeyed the knight and risen, bowed respectfully; and Helen, uttering some incoherent words of thanks, to hide her agitation, turned away. The hermit exclaimed, 'Again, my son, I beseech Heaven to bless thee!'

'And may its guardian care shield all here!' replied the knight. Helen looked up to bid him a last farewell—but he was gone. The hermit had left the cell with him; and the youth also had disappeared into the inner cave. Being left alone, she threw herself down before the altar; and giving way to a burst of tears, inwardly implored protection for that brave knight's life; and by his means to grant safety to Wallace, and freedom to her father!

As she prayed, her emotion subsided; and a holy confidence elevating her mind, she remained in an ecstasy of hope, till a solemn voice from behind her called her from this happy trance.

'Blessed are they which put their trust in God!'

She calmly rose, and perceived the hermit; who, on entering, had observed her devout position, and the spontaneous benediction broke from his lips: 'Daughter,' said he, leading her to a seat; 'this hero will prevail; for the Power before whose altar you have just knelt, has declared, "My might is with them who obey my laws, and put their trust in me!" You speak highly of the young and valiant Sir William Wallace, but I cannot conceive that he can be better formed for great and heroic deeds than this chief. Suppose them, then, to be equal; when they have met, with two such leaders, what may not a few determined Scots perform?'

Helen sympathised with the cheering prognostications of the hermit; and wishing to learn the name of this rival of a character she had regarded as unparalleled, she asked with a blush, by what title she must call the knight who had undertaken so hazardous an enterprise for her.

'I know not,' returned the hermit; 'I never saw your gallant deliverer before yesterday morning. Broken from my matins by a sudden noise, I beheld a deer rush down the precipice, and fall headlong. As he lay struggling amongst the stones at the entrance of my cave, I had just observed an arrow in his side, when a shout issued from the rocks above, and looking up, I beheld a young chieftain, with a bow in his hand, leaping from cliff to cliff, till springing from a high projection on the right, he lit at once at the head of the wounded deer.

'I emerged from the recess that concealed me, and addressed him with the benediction of the morning. His plaided followers immediately appeared, and with a stroke of their ready weapons slew the animal. The chief left them

to dress it for their own refreshment; and, on my invitation, entered the cell to share a hermit's fare.

'I told him who I was, and what had driven me to this seclusion. In return, he informed me of a design he had conceived, to stimulate the surrounding chiefs to some exertions for their country; but as he never mentioned his name, I concluded he wished it to remain unrevealed, and therefore I forbore to inquire it. I imparted to him my doubts of the possibility of any single individual being able to arouse the slumbering courage of our country; but his language soon filled me with other thoughts. The arguments he means to use are few and conclusive. They are these: the perfidy of King Edward; who, deemed a prince of high honour, had been chosen umpire in the cause of Bruce and Baliol. He accepted the task, in the character of a friend to Scotland; but no sooner was he advanced into the heart of our kingdom, and at the head of the large army he had treacherously introduced as a mere appendage of state, than he declared the act of judgment, was his right as liege lord of the realm! This falsehood, which our records disproved at the outset, was not his only baseness: he bought the conscience of Baliol, and adjudged to him the throne. The recreant prince acknowledged him his master; and in that degrading ceremony of homage, he was followed by almost all the lowland Scottish lords. But this vile yielding did not purchase them peace: Edward demanded oppressive services from the King, and the castles of the nobility to be resigned to English governors. These requisitions being remonstrated against by a few of our boldest chiefs, (amongst whom, your illustrious father, gentle lady, stood the most conspicuous,) the tyrant repeated them with additional demands; and prepared to resent the appeal, on the whole nation.

'Three months have hardly elapsed since the fatal battle of Dunbar; where, indignant at the accumulated outrages committed on their passive monarch, our irritated

nobles at last rose, but too late, to assert their rights: alas! one defeat drove them to despair. Baliol was taken, and themselves obliged to again swear fealty to their enemy. Then came the seizure of the treasures of our monasteries, the burning of the national records, the sequestration of our property, the banishment of our chiefs, the violation of our women, and the slavery or murder of the poor people yoked to the land. "The storm of desolation thus raging over our country, how," cried the young warrior to me, "can any of her sons shrink from the glory of again attempting her restoration!" He then informed me that Earl de Warenne (whom Edward had left Lord Warden of Scotland) is taken ill, and retired to London, leaving Aymer de Valence to be his deputy. To this new tyrant De Warenne has lately sent a host of mercenaries to hold the south of Scotland in subjection; and to reinforce Cressingham and Ormsby, two noted plunderers, who command northwards, from Stirling to the shores of Sutherland.

'With these representations of the conduct of our oppressors, the brave knight demonstrated the facility with which invaders, drunk with power, and gorged with rapine, could be vanquished by a resolute and hardy people. The absence of Edward, who is now abroad, increases the probability of success. The knight's design is to infuse his own spirit into the bosoms of the chiefs in this part of the kingdom. By their assistance, to seize the fortresses in the Lowlands, and so form a chain of repulsion against the admission of fresh troops from England. Then, while other chiefs (to whom he means to apply) rise in the Highlands, the Southron garrisons there, being unsupported by supplies, must become an easy prey; and would yield men of consequence, to be exchanged for our countrymen, now prisoners in England. For the present, he wishes to be furnished with troops merely enough to take some castle, of power sufficient to give confidence to his friends. On his becoming master of such a place, it

should be the signal for all to declare themselves; and, rising at once, overwhelm Edward's garrisons in every part of Scotland.

'This is the knight's plan; and for your sake, as well as for the cause, I hope the first fortress he gains may be that of Dumbarton: it has always been considered the key of the country.'

'May Heaven grant it, holy father,' returned Helen; 'and, whoever this knight may be, I pray the blessed St. Andrew to guide his arms!'

'If I may venture to guess who he is,' replied the hermit, 'I would say that noble brow was formed to some day wear a crown.'

'What!' cried Helen, starting, 'you think this knight is the royal Bruce?'

'I am at a loss what to think,' replied the hermit; 'he has a most princely air; and there is such an overflowing of soul towards his country, when he speaks of it, that—— such love can spring from no other than the royal heart, created to foster and to bless it.'

'But is he not too young?' inquired Helen. 'I have heard my father say, that Bruce, Lord of Annandale, the opponent of Baliol for the crown, was much his senior; and that his son, the Earl of Carrick, must be now fifty years of age. This knight, if I am any judge of looks, cannot be twenty-five.'

'True,' answered the hermit; 'and yet he may be a Bruce. For it is neither of the two you have mentioned, that I mean; but the grandson of the one and the son of the other. You may see by this silver beard, lady, that the winter of my life is far spent. The elder Bruce, Robert, Lord of Annandale, was my contemporary; we were boys together, and educated at the same college in Icolmkill. He was brave, and passed his manhood in visiting different courts; at last, marrying a lady of the princely house of Clare, he took her to France, and confided his only son to be brought up under the renowned

Saint Lewis. Which young Robert took the cross while quite a youth; and carrying the banner of the holy King of France to the plains of Palestine, covered himself with glory. In storming a Saracen fortress, he rescued the person of Prince Edward of England. The horrible tyrant, who now tramples on all laws human and divine, was then in the bloom of youth, defending the cause of Christianity! Think on that, sweet lady, and marvel at the changing power of ambition!

'From that hour, a strict friendship subsisted between the two young crusaders: and when Edward mounted the throne of England, it being then the ally of Scotland, the old Earl of Annandale, to please his brave son, took up his residence at the English court. When the male issue of our King David failed in the untimely death of Alexander III., then came the contention between Bruce and Baliol for the vacant crown. Our most venerable chiefs, the guardians of our laws, and the witnesses of the parliamentary settlement made on the house of Bruce during the reign of the late king, all declared for Lord Annandale. He was not only the male heir in propinquity of blood, but his experienced years, and known virtues, excited all true Scots to place him on the throne.

'Meanwhile Edward, forgetting friendship to his friend, and fidelity to a faithful ally, was undermining the interest of Bruce, and the peace of the kingdom. Inferior rivals to our favourite prince were soon discountenanced; but by covert ways, with bribes and promises, the King of England raised such an opposition on the side of Baliol, as threatened a civil war. Secure in his right, and averse to plunge his country in blood, Bruce easily fell in with a proposal insidiously hinted to him by one of Edward's creatures,—"to require that monarch to be umpire between him and Baliol." Then it was that Edward, after soliciting the requisition as an honour to be conferred on him, declared it was his right as supreme Lord of Scotland. The Earl of Annandale refused to acknowledge this assumption.

Baliol bowed to it; and for such obedience, the unrighteous judge gave him the crown. Bruce absolutely refused to acknowledge the justice of this decision; and to avoid the power of the King who had betrayed his rights, and the jealousy of the other who had usurped them, he immediately left the scene of action; going over seas to join his son, who had been cajoled away to Paris. But, alas! he died on the road of a broken heart.

'When his son Robert (who was Earl of Carrick in right of his wife) returned to Britain, he, like his father, disdained to acknowledge Baliol as king. But being more incensed at his successful rival, than at the treachery of his false friend Edward, he believed his glossing speeches; and—by what infatuation I cannot tell—established his residence at that monarch's court. This forgetfulness of his royal blood, and of the independency of Scotland, has nearly obliterated him from every Scottish heart; for, when we look at Bruce the courtier, we cease to remember Bruce the descendant of St. David—Bruce the valiant knight of the Cross, who bled for true liberty before the walls of Jerusalem.

'His eldest son may be now about the age of the young knight who has just left us; and when I look on his royal port, and listen to the patriotic fervours of his soul, I cannot but think that the spirit of his noble grandsire has revived in his breast; and that, leaving his indolent father to the vassal luxuries of Edward's palace, he is come hither in secret to arouse Scotland, and to assert his claim.'

'It is very likely,' rejoined Helen, deeply sighing; 'and may Heaven reward his virtue with the crown of his ancestors!'

'To that end,' replied the hermit, 'shall my hands be lifted up in prayer day and night. May I, O gracious Power!' cried he, looking upwards, and pressing the cross to his breast, 'live but to see that hero victorious, and Scotland free; and then "let thy servant depart in peace, since mine eyes will have seen her salvation!" '

CHAPTER XI

CARTLANE CRAIGS, AND GLENFINLASS

GUIDED by Ker, Murray led his followers over the Lanark hills, by the most untrodden paths; and hence avoided even the sight of a Southron soldier.

Cheered by so favourable a commencement of their expedition, they even felt no dismay when, at the gloom of evening, Ker descried a body of armed men at a distance, sitting round a fire at the foot of a beetling rock which guards the western entrance to the Cartlane craigs. Murray ordered his men to proceed under covert of the bushes; and then making the signal (concerted in case of such dilemma), they struck their iron crows into the interstices of the cliff; and catching at the branches which grew out of its precipitous side, with much exertion, but in perfect silence, at last gained the summit. That effected, they pursued their way with the same caution, till after a long march, and without encountering a human being, they reached the base of the huge rock which Wallace had made his fortress.

Ker, who expected to find it surrounded by an English army, was amazed at the deathlike solitude. 'The place is deserted,' cried he. 'My brave friend, compelled by the extremity of his little garrison, has been obliged to surrender.'

'We will ascend and see,' was Murray's answer.

Ker led round the rock to the most accessible point; and mounting by the projecting stones, with some difficulty gained the top. Silence pervaded every part; and the rugged cavities at the summit, which had formed the temporary quarters of his comrades, were lonely. On entering the recess, where Wallace used to seek a few minutes' slumber, the moon, which shone full into the cave, discovered something bright lying in a distant corner. Ker hastily approached it; recollecting what

Wallace had told him, that if during his absence he could find means of escape, he would leave some weapon as a sign: a dagger, if necessity drove him to the south point, where he must fight his way through the valley; and an arrow, if he could effect it without observation, by the north, as he should then seek an asylum for his exhausted followers in the far-off wilds of Glenfinlass.

It was the iron head of an arrow, which the moon had silvered; and Ker catching it up with a gladdened countenance exclaimed, 'He is safe! this calls us to Glenfinlass.' He then explained to Murray what had been the arrangement of Wallace respecting this sign, and without hesitation the young Lord decided to follow him up that track.

Turning towards the northern part of the cliff, they came to a spot beneath which had been the strongest guard of the enemy, but now, like the rest, it was entirely abandoned. A narrow winding path led from this rocky platform, to a fall of water, roaring and rushing by the mouth of a large cavern. After they had descended the main craig, they clambered over the top of this cave; and entering upon another sweep of rugged hills, commenced a rapid march.

Traversing the lower part of Stirlingshire, they crossed Graham's Dyke; and pursuing their course westward, left Stirling castle far to the right. They ascended the Ochil hills; and proceeding along the wooded heights which overhang the banks of Teith, forded that river, and entered at once into the broad valley which opened to them a distant view of Ben Lomond and Ben Ledi.

'There,' exclaimed Ker, extending his hand towards the cloud-capped Ledi; 'beneath the shadow of that mountain, we shall find the light of Scotland, our dear master in arms!'

At this intimation, the wearied Murrays,—like seamen, long harassed on a tempestuous ocean, at sight of a port,—uttered a shout of joy; and hastening forward with

renovated strength, met a foaming river in their path. Despising all obstacles, they rushed in, and, buffeting the waves, soon found a firm footing on the opposite shore. The sun shone cheerily above their heads; illuminating the umbrageous sides of the mountains with a dewy splendour, while Ben Ledi, the standard of their hope, seemed to wave them on, as the white clouds streamed from its summit; or, rolling down its dark sides, floated in strange visionary shapes over the lakes beneath.

When the little troop halted on the shore of Loch Venachoir, the mists, which had lingered on the brow of Ledi, slowly descended into the valley; and covering the mouth of the pass that led from the loch, seemed to shut them at once between the mountain, and that world of waters. Ker, who had never been in these tracks before, wondered at their sublimity; and became alarmed lest they should lose their way amid such infinite windings. But Murray, who remembered having once explored them with his father, led promptly forward, by a steep rough road in the side of the mountain. As they clung by the slippery rocks which overhung the lake, its mists dissolved into a heavy shower; and, by degrees clearing away, discovered the shining heads of Ben Lomond and Ben Chochan.

The party soon entered a precipitous labyrinth of craigs; and, passing onward, gradually descended amid pouring torrents, and gaping chasms overlaced with branching trees, till the augmented roar of waters intimated to Murray, they drew near the great fall of Glenfinlass. The river, though rushing on its course with the noise of thunder, was scarcely discerned through the thick forest which groaned over its waves. Here towered a host of stately pines; and there, the lofty beeches, birches, and mountain oak, bending over the flood, interwove their giant arms; forming an arch so impenetrable, that while the sun brightened the tops of the mountains, all beneath lay in deepest midnight.

The awful entrance to this sublime valley struck the whole party with a feeling that made them pause. It seemed as if to these sacred solitudes, hidden in the very bosom of Scotland, no hostile foot dared intrude. Murray looked at Ker: 'We go, my friend, to arouse the genius of our country! Here are the native fastnesses of Scotland; and from this pass the spirit will issue, that is to bid her enslaved sons and daughters be free.'

They entered: and with beating hearts pursued their way along the western border of Loch Lubnaig, till the royal heights of Craignacoheilg showed their summits, covered with heath and many an ivied turret. The forest, stretching far over the valley, lost its high trees in the shadows of the surrounding mountains, and told them they were now in the centre of Glenfinlass.

Ker put his bugle to his lips, and sounded the pibroch of Ellerslie. A thousand echoes returned the notes; and after a pause, which allowed their last response to die away, the air was answered by a horn from the heights of Craignacoheilg. An armed man then appeared on the rock, leaning forwards. Ker drew near, and taking off his bonnet, called aloud:—'Stephen! it is William Ker who speaks. I come with the Lord Andrew Murray of Bothwell to the support of our commander Sir William Wallace.'

At these words, Stephen placed his bugle to his mouth, and in a few minutes the rock was covered with the members of its little garrison. Women and children appeared, shouting with joy; and the men, descending the side next the glen, hastened to bid their comrade welcome. One advanced towards Murray, whom he instantly recognized to be Sir Roger Kirkpatrick of Torthorald. The chiefs saluted each other; and Lord Andrew pointed to his men: 'I have brought,' said he, 'these few brave fellows to the aid of Sir William Wallace. They should have been more, but for new events of Southron outrage. Yet I am impatient to lead them to the presence of my uncle's preserver.'

Kirkpatrick's answer disappointed the eager spirit of the young warrior: 'I am sorry, brave Murray, that you have no better knight to receive you than myself. I and the gallant chief have not yet met; but I am in arms for him; and the hour of retribution for all our injuries, I trust, is at hand.'

'But where is Sir William Wallace?' demanded Murray.

'Gone towards the Forth, to rouse that part of sleeping Scotland. If all he meet have my spirit, they will not require a second call. Now is the time to aim the blow; I shall ever give thanks to the accident which brought me the welcome news, that an arm is raised to strike it home.'

As he spoke, he led Murray to the rampart-like cliffs which crown the summit of Craignacoheilg. In the midst stood a tower, which had once been a favourite hunting-lodge of the great King Fergus. There Kirkpatrick joyfully greeted his guest a second time: 'This,' said he, 'is the far-famed *lodge of the three kings:* here did our lion, Fergus, attended by his royal allies, Durstus the Pict, and Dionethus the Briton, spread his board during their huntings in Glenfinlass. And here eight hundred years ago, did the same heroic prince, form the plans which saved his kingdom from a foreign yoke! On the same spot, we will lay ours; and in their completion, rescue Scotland from a tyranny, more intolerable than that which menaced him. Yes, Murray; there is not a stone in this building that does not call aloud to us to draw the sword, and hold it unsheathed till our country be free.'

'And by the ghost of that same Fergus, I swear,' exclaimed Murray, 'that my honest claymore shall never shroud its head, while an invader be left alive in Scotland.'

Kirkpatrick caught him in his arms: 'Brave son of the noble Bothwell, thou art after mine own heart! The blow which the dastard Cressingham durst aim at a Scottish chief, still smarts upon my cheek; and rivers of his countrymen's blood shall wash out the stain. After I had been

persuaded by his serpent eloquence, to swear fealty to Edward on the defeat at Dunbar, I vainly thought that Scotland had only changed a weak and unfortunate prince, for a wise and victorious king; but when in the courts of Stirling, I heard Cressingham propose to the barons north of the dyke, that they should give their strongest castles into English hands; when I opposed the measure with all the indignation of a Scot who saw himself betrayed, he first tried to overturn my arguments; and finding that impossible; while I repeated them with redoubled force—he struck me!—Powers of earth and heaven, what was then the tempest of my soul!—I drew my sword—I would have laid him dead at my feet, had not my obsequious countrymen held my arm, and dragged me from the apartment.

'Covered with dishonour by a blow I could not avenge, I fled to my brother-in-law Sir John Scott, of Loch Doine. With him I buried my injury from the world; but it lived in my heart;—it haunted me day and night, calling for revenge.

'In such an hour, how did I receive the tidings, that Sir William Wallace was in arms against the tyrant!—It was the voice of retribution calling me to peace of mind! Even my bed-ridden kinsman, partook my emotions; and with his zealous concurrence, I led a band of his hardiest clansmen, to reinforce the brave men of Lanark on this rock.

'Two days, I have now been here, awaiting in anxious impatience the arrival of Wallace. Yes! we will mingle our injured souls together! He has made one offering; I must make another! We shall set forth to Stirling; and there, in the very heart of his den, I will sacrifice the tiger Cressingham, to the vengeance of our wrongs.'

'But what, my brave friend,' asked Murray, 'are the forces you deem sufficient for so great an enterprise? How many fighting men may be counted of Wallace's own company, besides your own?'

'We have here about a hundred,' replied Kirkpatrick, 'including yours.'

'How inadequate to storm so formidable a place as Stirling castle!' returned Murray. 'Having, indeed, passed the Rubicon, we must go forward; but resolution, not rashness, should be the principle of our actions. And my opinion is, that a few minor advantages obtained, our countrymen would flock to our standard; the enemy would be intimidated; and we should carry thousands, instead of hundreds, before the walls of Stirling. To attempt it now, would invite defeat, and pluck upon us the ruin of our entire project.'

'You are right, young man,' cried Kirkpatrick; 'my grey head, rendered impetuous by insult, did not pause on the blind temerity of my scheme. I would rather for years watch the opportunity of taking a signal revenge, than not accomplish it at last. Oh! I would rather waste all my life in these solitary wilds, and know that at the close of it, I should see the blood of Cressingham on these hands, than live a prince and die unrevenged!'

CHAPTER XII

GRAIGNACOHEILG

Sleep, the gentle sister of that awful power which shrouds man in its cold bosom, and bears him in still repose to the blissful wakefulness of eternal life:—she, sweet restorer! wraps him in her balmy embraces: and extracting from his wearied limbs the effects of every toil, safely relinquishes the refreshed slumberer at morn to the newborn vigour that is her gift, to the gladsome breezes which call us forth to labour and enjoyment.

Such was the rest of the youthful Murray, till the shrill notes of a hundred bugles piercing his ear, made him start. He listened; they sounded again. The morning had fully broke. He sprung from his couch, hurried on his armour,

and snatching up his lance and target, issued from the tower. Several women were flying past the gate. On seeing him they exclaimed:—'The Lord Wallace is arrived.—His bugles have sounded—our husbands are returned!'

Murray followed their eager footsteps, and reached the edge of the rock just as the brave group were ascending. A stranger was also there, who, from his extreme youth and elegance, he judged must be the young protector of his clansmen; but he forbore to address him until they should be presented to each other by Wallace himself.

It was indeed the same. On hearing the first blast of the horn, the youthful chieftain had hastened from his bed of heath, and buckling on his brigandine, rushed to the rock; but at sight of the noble figure which first gained the summit, the young hero fell back: an indescribable awe checked his steps; and he stood at a distance while Kirkpatrick welcomed the chief and introduced Lord Andrew Murray. Wallace received the latter with a glad smile; and taking him warmly by the hand, 'Gallant Murray,' said he, 'with such assistance, I hope to reinstate your brave uncle in Bothwell castle, and soon to cut a passage to even a mightier rescue! We must carry off Scotland from the tyrant's arms; or,' added he in a graver tone, 'we shall only rivet her chains the closer.'

'I am but a poor auxiliary,' returned Murray; 'my troop is a scanty one, for it is of my own gathering. It is not my father's nor my uncle's strength that I bring along with me. But there is one here,' continued he, 'who has preserved a party of men sent by my cousin, Lady Helen Mar, almost double my numbers.'

At this reference to the youthful warrior, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick discerned him at a distance; and hastened towards him, while Murray briefly related to Wallace the extraordinary conduct of this unknown. On being told that the chief waited to receive him, the youth hastened forward with a trepidation he never had felt before; but it

was a trepidation that did not subtract from his own worth: it was the timidity of a noble heart which believed it approached one of the most perfect among mortals; and while its anxious pulse beat to emulate such merit, a generous consciousness of measureless inferiority embarrassed him with a confusion so amiable, that Wallace, who perceived his extreme youth and emotion, opened his arms and embraced him. 'Brave youth,' cried he, 'I trust that the power which blesses our cause will enable me to return you with many a well-earned glory to the bosom of your family!'

Edwin was encouraged by the frank address of a hero whom he expected to have found reserved and wrapped in the deep glooms of the fate which had roused him to be a thunderbolt of Heaven; but when he saw a benign, though pale countenance, hail him with smiles, he made a strong effort to shake off the awe with which the name and the dignity of figure and mien of Wallace had oppressed him; and with a mantling blush he replied:—'My family are worthy of your esteem; my father is brave: but my mother, fearing for me her favourite son, prevailed on him to put me into a monastery. Dreading the power of the English, even there she allowed none but the abbot to know who I was. And as he chose to hide my name; and I have burst from my concealment without her knowledge; till I do something worthy of that name, and deserving her pardon, permit me, noble Wallace, to follow your footsteps by the simple appellation of Edwin.'

'Noble boy,' returned the chief, 'your wish shall be respected. We urge you no further to reveal, what such innate bravery must shortly proclaim in the most honourable manner.'

The whole of the troop having ascended; while their wives, children, and friends, were rejoicing in their embraces; Wallace asked some questions relative to Bothwell, and Murray briefly related the disasters which had happened there.

'My father,' added he, 'is still with the Lord of Lochawe; and thither I sent to request him to despatch to the Cartlane craigs all the followers he took with him into Argyleshire. But as things are, would it not be well to send a second messenger, to say that you have sought refuge in Glenfinlass?'

'Before he could arrive,' returned Wallace, 'I hope we shall be where Lord Bothwell's reinforcements may reach us by water. Our present object must be the Earl of Mar. He is the first Scottish earl who has hazarded his estates and life for Scotland; and as her best friend, his liberation must be our first enterprise. In my circuit through two or three eastern counties, a promising increase has been made to our little army. The Frasers of Oliver castle have given me two hundred men; and the brave Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, whom I met in West Lothian, has not only brought fifty stout Scots to my command; but, as hereditary standard-bearer of the kingdom, has come himself, to carry the royal banner of Scotland to glory or oblivion.'

'To glory!' cried Murray, waving his sword: 'Oh! not while a Scot survives, shall that blood-red lion[1] again lick the dust!'

'No,' cried Kirkpatrick, his eyes flashing fire; 'rather may every Scot, and every Southron, fall in the struggle, and fill one grave! Let me,' cried he, sternly grasping the hilt of his sword, and looking upwards; 'let me, oh, Saviour of mankind, live but to see the Forth and the Clyde, so often reddened with our blood, dye the eastern and the western oceans, with the vital flood of these our foes; and when none is spared, then let me die in peace.'

The eyes of Wallace glanced on the young Edwin, who stood gazing on Kirkpatrick; and turning on the knight, with a powerful look of reprehension—'Check that prayer,' cried he; 'remember, my brave companion, what the Saviour of mankind was: and then think, whether he who

[1] A *lion gules*, in a field *or*, is the arms of Scotland.—(1809.)

offered life to all the world, will listen to so damning an invocation. If we would be blessed in the contest, we must be merciful.'

'To whom?' exclaimed Kirkpatrick; 'to the robbers, who tear from us our lands; to the ruffians, who wrest from us our honours? But you are patient; you never received a blow!'

'Yes,' cried Wallace, turning paler; 'a heavy one,—on my heart.'

'True,' returned Kirkpatrick; 'your wife fell under the steel of a Southron governor; and you slew him for it! You were revenged; your feelings were appeased.'

'Not the death of fifty thousand governors,' replied Wallace, 'could appease my feelings. Revenge were insufficient to satisfy the yearnings of my soul.' For a moment he covered his agitated features with his hand, and then proceeded; 'I slew Heselrigge, because he was a monster, under whom the earth groaned. My sorrow, deep, deep as it was—was but one of many, which his rapacity, and his nephew's licentiousness, had produced. Both fell beneath my arm; but I do not denounce the whole nation, without reserve!—When the sword of war is drawn, all who resist, must conquer or fall: but there are some noble English, who abhor the tyranny they are obliged to exercise over us; and when they declare such remorse, shall they not find mercy at our hands? Surely, if not for humanity, for policy's sake, we ought to give quarter: for the exterminating sword, if not always victorious, incurs the ruin it threatens. I even hope, that by our righteous cause, and our clemency, we shall not only gather our own people to our legions, but turn the hearts of the poor Welsh and the misled Irish, whom the usurper has forced into his armies; and so confront him with troops of his own levying. Many of the English were too just to share in the subjugation of the country they had sworn to befriend. And their less honourable countrymen, when they see Scotsmen no longer consenting to their own

degradation, may take shame to themselves, for assisting to betray a confiding people.'

'That may be,' returned Kirkpatrick; 'but surely you would not rank Aymer de Valence, who lords it over Dumbarton; and Cressingham, who acts the tyrant in Stirling; you would not rank them amongst these conscientious English?'

'No,' replied Wallace; 'the haughty oppression of the one, and the wanton cruelty of the other, have given Scotland too many wounds, for me to hold a shield before them; meet them, and I leave them to your sword.'

'And by heavens!' cried Kirkpatrick, gnashing his teeth with the fury of a tiger, 'they shall know its point!'

Wallace then informed his friends, he purposed marching next morning by day-break, towards Dumbarton castle:—'When we make the attack,' said he, 'it must be in the night; for I propose seizing it by storm.'

Murray and Kirkpatrick joyfully acquiesced. Edwin smiled an enraptured assent: and Wallace, with many a gracious look and speech, disengaged himself from the clinging embraces of the weaker part of the garrison; who, seeing in him the spring of their husbands' might, and the guard of their own safety, clung to him as to a presiding deity.

'You, my dear countrywomen,' said he, 'shall find a home for your aged parents, your children, and yourselves, with the venerable Sir John Scott of Loch Doine. You are to be conducted thither this evening; and there await in comfort, the happy return of your husbands; whom Providence now leads forth to be the champions of your country.'

Filled with enthusiasm, the women uttered a shout of triumph; and embracing their husbands, declared they were ready to resign them wholly to Heaven, and Sir William Wallace.

Wallace left them with these tender relatives, from whom they were so soon to part; and retired with his chieftains, to arrange the plan of his proposed attack.

Delighted with the glory which seemed to wave him from the pinnacles of Dumbarton rock, Edwin listened in profound silence to all that was said; and then hastened to his quarters, to prepare his armour for the ensuing morning.

CHAPTER XIII

LOCH LOMOND

PROFOUND as was the rest of Wallace, yet the first clarion of the lark awakened him. The rosy dawn shone in at the window; and a fresh breeze wooed him with its inspiring breath, to rise and meet it. But the impulse was in his own mind; he needed nothing outward, to call him to action. Rising immediately, he put on his glittering hauberk; and issuing from the tower, raised his bugle to his lips, and blew so rousing a blast, that in an instant the whole rock was covered with soldiers.

Wallace placed his helmet on his head, and advanced towards them, just as Edwin had joined him, and Sir Roger Kirkpatrick appeared from the tower. 'Blest be this morn!' cried the old knight: 'My sword springs from its scabbard, to meet it:—and ere its good steel be sheathed again,' continued he, shaking it sternly; 'what deaths may dye its point!'

Wallace shuddered at the ferocity with which his colleague contemplated those features of war, from which every humane soldier would seek to turn his thoughts; that he might encounter it with the steadiness of a man, and not the irresolution of a woman. To hail the field of blood, with the fierceness of a hatred eager for the slaughter of its victim; to know any joy in combat, but that each contest might render another less necessary; did not enter into the imagination of Wallace, until he had heard, and seen, the infuriated Kirkpatrick. He talked of the coming battle, with horrid rapture; and told the young Edwin, he should that day see Loch Lomond red with English blood.

Offended at such savageness, but without answering him, Wallace drew towards Murray, and calling to Edwin, ordered him to march at his side. The youth seemed glad of the summons: and Wallace was pleased to observe it, as he thought that a longer stay with one who so grossly overcharged the feelings of honest patriotism, might breed disgust in his innocent mind against a cause which had so furious, and therefore unjust a defender.

'Justice and mercy ever dwell together,' said he to Edwin, who now drew near him; 'for universal love is the parent of justice as well as of mercy. But implacable Revenge! whence did she spring, but from the head of Satan himself?'

Though their cause appeared the same, never were two spirits more discordant than those of Wallace and Kirkpatrick. But Kirkpatrick did not so soon discover the dissimilarity; as it is easier for purity to descry its opposite, than for foulness to apprehend that anything can be purer than itself.

The forces being marshalled according to the preconcerted order, the three commanders, with Wallace at their head, led forward.

They passed through the forest of Glenfinlass: and morning, and evening, still found them thriddling its unsuspected solitudes, in unmolested security: night too, watched their onward march.

The sun had just risen, as the little band of patriots, the hope of freedom! emerged upon the eastern bank of Loch Lomond. The bases of the mountains were yet covered with the dispersing mist of the morning, and hardly distinguishable from the blue waters of the lake, which lashed the shore. The newly-awakened sheep bleated from the hills; and the umbrageous herbage, dropping dew, seemed glittering with a thousand fairy gems.

'Where is the man who would not fight for such a country!' exclaimed Murray, as he stepped over a bridge of interwoven trees, which crossed one of the mountain-

streams:— 'this land was not made for slaves. Look at these bulwarks of nature! Every mountain-head, which forms this chain of hills, is an impregnable rampart against invasion. If Baliol had possessed but half a heart, Edward might have returned even worse than Cæsar;— without a cockle to decorate his helmet.'

'Baliol has found the oblivion he incurred,' returned Wallace; 'his son, perhaps, may better deserve the sceptre of such a country. Let us cut the way; and he who merits the crown will soon appear to claim it.'

'Then it will not be Edward Baliol!' rejoined Scrymgeour: 'During the inconsistent reign of his father, I once carried a despatch to him from Scotland. He was then banqueting in all the luxuries of the English court; and such a voluptuary I never beheld! I left the scene of folly, only praying that so effeminate a prince might never disgrace the throne of our manly race of kings.'

'If such be the tuition of our lords, in the court of Edward—and wise is the policy, for his own views!' observed Ker; 'what can we expect from even the Bruce? They were ever a nobler race than the Baliol: but bad education, and luxury, will debase the most princely minds.'

'I saw neither of the Bruce, when I visited London,' replied Scrymgeour: 'the Earl of Carrick was at his house in Cleveland; and Robert Bruce, his eldest son, with the English army in Guienne. But they bore a manly character; particularly young Robert, to whom the troubadours of Aquitaine have given the flattering appellation of *Prince of Chivalry*.'

'It would be more to his honour,' interrupted Murray, 'if he compelled the English to acknowledge him as *Prince of Scotland*. With so much bravery, how can he allow such a civet-cat as Edward Baliol, to bear away the title, which is his by the double right of blood and virtue?'

'Perhaps,' said Wallace, 'the young lion only sleeps! The time may come, when both he, and his father, will rise from their lethargy, and throw themselves at once

into the arms of Scotland. To stimulate the dormant patriotism of these two princes, by showing them a subject, leading their people to liberty, is one great end of the victories I seek. None other than a brave king, can bind the various interests of this distracted country into one; and therefore for fair Freedom's sake, my heart turns towards the Bruces, with most anxious hopes.'

'For my part,' cried Murray, 'I have always thought, the lady we will not woo, we have no right to pretend to. If the Bruces will not be at the pains to snatch Scotland from drowning, I see no reason for making them a present of what will cost us many a wet jacket, before we tug her from the waves. He that wins the day, ought to wear the laurel: and so, once for all, I proclaim him King of good old Albin,[1] who will have the glory of driving her oppressors beyond her dykes.'

Wallace did not hear this last sentiment of Murray's, as it was spoken in a lowered voice in the ear of Kirkpatrick. 'I perfectly agree with you,' was that knight's reply; 'and in the true Roman style, may the death of every Southron now in Scotland, and as many more as fate chooses to yield us, be the preliminary games of his coronation!'

Wallace, who heard this, turned to Kirkpatrick with a mild rebuke in his eye: 'Balaam blest, when he meant to curse!' said he, 'but some curse, when they mean to bless. Such prayers are blasphemy. For, can we expect a blessing on our arms, when all our invocations are for vengeance rather than victory?'

'Blood for blood, is only justice?' returned Murray; 'and how can you, noble Wallace, as a Scot, and as a man, imply any mercy to the villains who stab us to the heart?'

'I plead not for them,' replied Wallace; 'but for the poor wretches who follow their leaders, by force, to the field of Scotland: I would not inflict on them the cruelties we now resent. It is not to aggrieve, but to redress, that we carry arms. If we make not this distinction, we turn courage

[1] Albin was the ancient name of Scotland.—(1809.)

into a crime; and plant disgrace, instead of honour, upon the warrior's brow.'

'I do not understand commiserating the wolves, who have so long made havoc in our country,' cried Kirkpatrick; 'methinks, such maidenly mercy is rather out of place.'

Wallace turned to him with a smile: 'I will answer you, my valiant friend, by adopting your own figure. It is that these Southron wolves, may not confound us with themselves, that I wish to show in our conduct, rather the generous ardour of the faithful guardian of the fold, than the rapacious fierceness which equals them with the beasts of the desert. As we are men and Scots, let the burden of our prayers be, the preservation of our country, not the slaughter of our enemies! The one is an ambition, with which angels may sympathise: the other, a horrible desire, which speaks the nature of fiends.'

'In some cases this may be,' replied Sir Roger, a little reconciled to the argument, 'but not in mine. My injury yet burns upon my cheek; and as nothing but the life-blood of Cressingham can quench it, I will listen no more to your doctrine, till I am revenged. That done, I shall not forget your lesson.'

'Generous Kirkpatrick!' exclaimed Wallace, 'nothing that is really cruel can dwell with such manly candour. Say what you will, I can trust your heart, after this moment.'

They had crossed the river Ennerie, and were issuing from between its narrow ridge of hills when Wallace, pointing to a stupendous rock which rose in solitary magnificence in the midst of a vast plain, exclaimed, 'There is Dumbarton castle!—that citadel holds the fetters of Scotland; and if we break them there, every minor link will easily give way.'

It was dusk when the little army arrived in the rear of a close thicket which skirted the eastern dyke of the castle, and reached to a considerable length over the plain. On this spot, Wallace rested his men; and while they placed themselves under its covert till the appointed time of

attack, he perceived through an opening in the wood, the gleaming of soldiers' arms on the ramparts; and fires beginning to light on a lonely watch-tower, which crowned the pinnacle of the highest rock.

'Poor fools!' exclaimed Murray: 'like the rest of their brethren of clay, they look abroad for evils, and prepare not for those which are even at their doors!'

'That beacon-fire,' cried Scrymgeour, 'shall light us to their chambers; and for once we thank them for their providence.'

'That beacon-fire,' whispered Edwin to Wallace, 'shall light me to honour! To-night, by your agreement, I shall call *you*, *brother*, or lie dead on the summit of those walls!'

'Edwin,' said Wallace, 'act as you say; and deserve, not only to be called my brother, but to be the first banneret of freedom in arms!'

He then turned towards the lines; and giving his orders to each division, directed them to seek repose on the surrounding heather, till the now-glowing moon should have sunk her tell-tale light in the waves.

All obeyed the voice of their commander, and retired to rest. But the eyes of Edwin could not close; his eager spirit was already on the walls of Dumbarton. His rapid mind anticipated the ascent of his general and his troop. But an imagination no less just than ardent, suggested the difficulties attending so small a force assailing so formidable a garrison, without some immediate knowledge of its relative situations. A sudden thought struck him. He would mount that rock alone; he would seek to ascertain the place of Lord Mar's confinement; that not one life in Wallace's faithful band, might be lost in a vague search.

'Ah! my general,' exclaimed he, 'Edwin shall be the first to spring those ramparts! he shall tread that dangerous path alone; and when he has thus proved himself not unworthy of thy confidence, he will return, to lead thee and thy soldiers to a sure victory; and himself to honour by thy side!'

This fervent apostrophe, breathed to the night alone, was no sooner uttered, than he stole from the thicket into which he had cast himself to repose. He looked towards the embattled cliff; its summit stood bright in the moonlight, but deep shadows lay beneath. 'God be my speed!' cried he, and wrapping himself in his plaid, so mixed its dark hues with the weeds and herbage at the base of the rock, that he made its circuit without having attracted observation.

The south side seemed the most easy of ascent; and by that he began his daring attempt. Having gained the height, he clambered behind a buttress; the shadow of which cast the wall into such black obscurity, that he crept safely through one of its crenelles, and dropping gently inwards, alighted on his feet. Still keeping to the shadowed side of the battlements, he proceeded cautiously along; and so stilly was his motion, that he passed undiscovered, even by the sentinels who guarded this quarter of the fortress.

He soon arrived at the open square before the citadel: it was yet occupied by groups of Southron officers, gaily walking to and fro under the light of the moon. In hopes of gaining some useful information from their discourse, he concealed himself behind a chest of arrows; and as they passed backwards and forwards, distinctly heard them jesting each other about divers fair dames of the country around. The conversation terminated in a debate, whether or no the indifference which their governor De Valence manifested to the majestic beauties of the Countess of Mar, were real or assumed. A thousand free remarks were made on the subject; and Edwin gathered sufficient from the discourse, to understand that the Earl and Countess were treated severely, and confined in a large square tower in the cleft of the rock.

Having learnt all that he could expect from these officers, he speeded, under the friendly shadow, towards the other side of the citadel; and arrived just as the guard

approached to relieve the sentinels of the northern postern. He laid himself close to the ground, and happily overheard the word of the night, as it was given to the new watch. This providential circumstance saved his life.

Finding no mode of regress from this place, but by the postern at which the sentinel was stationed; or by attempting a passage through a small adjoining tower, the door of which stood open; he considered a moment, and then deciding for the tower, stole unobserved into it. Fortunately no person was there: but Edwin found it full of spare arms, with two or three vacant couches in different corners, where, he supposed, the officers on guard occasionally reposed; several watch-cloaks lay on the floor. He readily apprehended the use he might make of this circumstance, and throwing one of them over his own shoulders, climbed to a large embrasure in the wall; and forcing himself through it, dropped to a declivity on the other side, which shelved down to the cliff, wherein he now saw the square tower.

He had scarcely lit on firm ground, when a sentinel, followed by two others with presented pikes, approached him, and demanded *the word.*—'*Montjoy!*'—was his reply. 'Why leap the embrasure?' said one. 'Why not enter by the postern?' demanded another. The conversation of the officers had given him a hint, on which he formed his answer. 'Love, my brave comrades,' replied he, 'seldom chooses even ways. I go on a message from a young ensign in the keep, to one of the Scottish damsels in yonder tower. Delay me, and his vengeance will fall upon us all.' —'Good luck to you, my lad!' was their answer; and, with a lightened step, he hastened towards the tower.

Not deeming it safe to seek an interview with any of the Earl's family, he crept along the base of the structure, and across the works, till he reached the high wall that blocks up egress from the north. He found this formidable curtain constructed of fragments of rock; and for the convenience of the guard, a sloping platform from within, led to the

top of the wall. On the other side it was perpendicular. A solitary sentinel stood there; and how to pass him was Edwin's next device. To attack him, would be desperate: being one of a chain of guards around the interior of the fortress, his voice need only to be raised in the least, to call a regiment to his assistance, and Edwin must be seized on the instant.

Aware of his danger, but not dismayed, the adventurous youth bethought him of his former excuse; and remembering a flask of spirits which Ireland had put into his pouch on leaving Glenfinlass, he affected to be intoxicated, and staggering up to the man, accosted him in the character of a servant of the garrison.

The sentinel did not doubt the appearance of the boy, and Edwin holding out the flask, said that a pretty girl in the great tower had not only given him a long draught of the same good liquor, but had filled his bottle, that he might not lack amusement, while her companion, one of Lady Mar's maids-in-waiting, was tying up a true lover's knot to send to his master in the garrison. The man believed Edwin's tale, the more readily, as he thrust the flask into his hand, and bade him drink: 'Do not spare it,' cried he: 'the night is chilly, and I shall get more where that came from.'

The unsuspecting Southron returned him a merry reply, and putting the flask to his head, soon drained its contents. They had the effect Edwin desired. The soldier became flustered, and impatient of his duty. Edwin perceived it, and yawning, complained of drowsiness. 'I would go to the top of that wall, and sleep sweetly in the moon-beams,' said he, 'if any good-natured fellow would meanwhile wait for my pretty Scot!'

The half-inebriated Southron liked no better sport; and regardless of duty, he promised to draw nearer the tower, and bring from the fair messenger the expected token.

Having thus far gained his point, with an apparently staggering, but really agile step, Edwin ascended the wall.

A leap from this dizzy height, was his only way to rejoin Wallace. To retread his steps through the fortress in safety, would hardly be possible; and besides, such a mode of retreat would leave him uninformed on the second object of his enterprise: to know the most vulnerable side of the fortress.

He threw himself along the summit of the wall, as if to sleep. He looked down, and saw nothing but the blackness of space: for here the broad expanse of shadow, rendered rocks and building of the same hue and level. But hope buoyed him in her arms; and turning his eyes towards the sentinel, he observed him to have arrived within a few paces of the square tower. This was Edwin's moment: grasping the projecting stone of the embattlement, and commending himself to Heaven, he threw himself from its summit, and fell, a fearful depth to the cliffs beneath.

Meanwhile, Wallace, having seen his brave followers depart to their repose, reclined himself along a pile of moss-grown stones; which, in the days of the renowned Fingal, had covered the body of some valiant Morven chieftain. He fixed his wakeful eyes on the castle, now illumined in every part by the fulness of the moon's lustre and considered which point would be most assailable by the scaling-ladders he had prepared. Every side seemed a precipice. The Leven, surrounding it on the north and the west; the Clyde, broad as a sea, on the south. The only place that seemed at all accessible, was the side next the dyke behind which he lay. Here the ascent to the castellated part of the rock, because most perpendicular, was the least guarded with outworks: and by this he determined to make the attempt, as soon as the setting moon should involve the garrison in darkness.

While he yet mused on what might be the momentous consequences of the succeeding midnight hours, he thought he heard a swift though cautious footstep. He raised himself, and laying his hand on his sword, saw a figure advancing towards him.

'Who goes there?' demanded Wallace.

'A faithful Scot,' was the reply.

Wallace recognised the voice of Edwin. 'What has disturbed you? Why do you not take rest with the others?'

'That we may have the surer to-morrow!' replied the youth: 'I am just returned from the summit of yonder rock.'

'How!' interrupted Wallace: 'have you scaled it alone, and are returned in safety?'

Wallace caught him in his arms: 'Intrepid, glorious boy! tell me for what purpose, did you thus hazard your precious life?'

'I wished to learn its most pregnable part,' replied Edwin, his young heart beating with triumph at these encomiums from his commander; 'and particularly where the good Earl is confined, that we might make our attack directly to the point.'

'And have you been successful?' demanded Wallace.

'I have,' was his answer. 'Lord Mar, and his lady, are kept in a square tower, which stands in the cleft between the two summits of the rock. It is not only surrounded by embattled walls, which flank the ponderous buttresses of this huge dungeon; but the space on which it stands is bulwarked at each end, by a stone curtain of fifteen feet high, guarded by turrets full of armed men.'

'And yet by that side, you suppose we must ascend?' said Wallace.

'Certainly: for if you attempt it on the west, we should have to scale the watch-tower cliff, and the ascent could only be gained in file. Should we take the south, we must cut through the whole garrison, before we could reach the Earl. And on this side, the morass lies too near the foot of the rock, to admit an approach without the greatest danger. But on the north, where I descended; by wading through part of the Leven, and climbing from cliff to cliff, I have every hope you may succeed.'

Edwin recounted the particulars of his progress through the fortress; and by the minuteness of his topographical descriptions, enforced his arguments for the north to be the point assailed. Closing his narrative, he explained to the anxious inquiry of Wallace, how he had escaped accident in a leap of so many feet. The wall was covered with ivy; he caught by its branches in his descent, and at last happily fell amongst a thick bed of furze. After this, he clambered down the steep; and fording the Leven (there only knee-deep), now appeared before his general, elate in heart, and bright in valour.

Wallace would now have sent him to repose himself; but animated by the success of his adventure, and exulting in the honour which was so soon to stamp a sign of this exploit, upon him for ever; he told his leader, that he felt no want of sleep; and would rather take on him the office of arousing the other captains to their stations; the moon, their preconcerted signal, being then approaching its rest.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FORTRESS

Kirkpatrick, Murray, and Scrymgeour, hastened to their commander; and in a few minutes all were under arms. Wallace briefly explained his altered plan of assault; and marshalling his men accordingly, led them in silence through the water, and along the beach, which lay between the rock and the Leven. Arriving at the base just as the moon set, they began to ascend. To do this in the dark, redoubled the difficulty; but as Wallace had the place of every accessible stone accurately described to him by Edwin, he went confidently forward, followed by his Lanarkmen.

He and they, being the first to mount, fixed and held the tops of the scaling-ladders, while Kirkpatrick and Scrymgeour, with their men, gradually ascended, and gained the

bottom of the wall. Here, planting themselves in the crannies of the rock, under the impenetrable darkness of the night (for the moon had not only set, but the stars were obscured by clouds) they awaited the signal for the final ascent.

Meanwhile, Edwin led Lord Andrew with his followers, and the Fraser men, round by the western side to mount the watch-tower rock, and seize the few soldiers who kept the beacon. As a signal of having succeeded, they were to smother the flame on the top of the tower, and thence descend towards the garrison, to meet Wallace before the prison of the Earl of Mar.

While the men of Lanark, with their eyes fixed on the burning beacon, in deadly stillness watched the appointed signal for the attack, Wallace, by the aid of his dagger, which he struck into the firm soil that occupied the cracks in the rock, drew himself up almost parallel with the top of the great wall, which clasped the bases of the two hills. He listened; not a voice was to be heard in the garrison, of all the legions he had so lately seen glittering on its battlements. It was an awful pause.

Now was the moment, when Scotland was to make her first essay for freedom! Should it fail, ten thousand bolts of iron would be added to her chains! Should it succeed, liberty and happiness were the almost certain consequences.

He looked up; and fixing his eyes on the beacon-flame, thought he saw the figures of men pass before it—the next moment all was darkness—he sprang on the wall; and feeling, by the touch of hands about his feet, that his brave followers had already mounted their ladders, he grasped his sword firmly, and leaped down on the ground within. In that moment, he struck against the sentinel, who was just passing, and by the violence of the shock struck him to the earth; but the man, as he fell, catching Wallace round the waist, dragged him after him, and with a vociferous cry, shouted *Treason!*

Several sentinels ran with levelled pikes to the spot; the adjacent turrets emptied themselves of their armed inhabitants; and all assaulted Wallace, just as he had extricated himself from the grasp of the prostrate soldier.

'Who are you?' demanded they.

'Your enemy,' and the speaker fell at his feet with one stroke of his sword.

'Alarm!—Treason!' resounded from the rest, as they aimed their random strokes at the conquering chief. But he was now assisted by the vigorous arm of Ker, and of several Lanarkmen; who, having cleared the wall, were dealing about blows in the darkness, which filled the air with groans, and strewed the ground with the dying and the dead.

One or two Southrons, whose courage was not equal to their caution, fled to arouse the garrison; and just as the whole of Wallace's men leaped the wall, and rallied to his support, the inner ballium gate burst open, and a legion of foes, bearing torches, issued to the contest. With horrible threatenings, they came on; and by a rapid movement, surrounded Wallace and his little company. But his soul brightened in danger; and his men, warmed with the same spirit, stood firm with fixed pikes, receiving without injury, the assault. Their weapons being longer than the enemy's, the Southrons, not aware of the circumstance, rushed upon their points, incurring the death they meant to give. Seeing their consequent disorder, Wallace ordered the pikes to be dropped, and his men to charge sword in hand. Terrible was now the havoc; for the desperate Scots, grappling each of his foe with a fatal hold, let not go till the piercing shriek, or the agonised groan, convinced him that death had seized its victim. Wallace fought in front, making a dreadful passage through the falling ranks; while the tremendous sweep of his sword, flashing in the intermitting light, warned the survivors where the avenging blade would next descend. A horrid vacuity was made in the lately thronged spot: it seemed not the slaughter of a mortal arm, but as if the destroying

angel himself were there: and with one blast of his desolating brand, had laid all in ruin. The platform was cleared; and the fallen torches, some half-extinguished, and others flaming on the ground by the sides of the dead, showed, in their uncertain gleams, a few terrified wretches seeking safety in flight. The same lurid rays, casting a transitory light on the iron gratings of the great tower, informed Wallace that the heat of conflict had drawn him to the prison of the Earl.

'We are now near the end of this night's work!' cried he. 'Let us press forward, to give freedom to the Earl of Mar!'

'Liberty, and Lord Mar!' cried Kirkpatrick, rushing onwards. He was immediately followed by his own men; but not quick enough for his daring. The guard in the tower, hearing the outcry, issued from the flanking gates, and, surrounding him, took him prisoner.

'If there be might in your arms,' roared he with the voice of a lion, 'men of Loch Doine, rescue your leader!'

They hurried forward, with yells of defiance: but the strength of the garrison, awakened by the flying wretches from the defeat, turned out all its power; and, with De Valance at their head, pouring on Kirkpatrick's men, would have overpowered them, had not Wallace, and his sixty heroes, with desperate determination, cut a passage to them through the closing ranks.

Pikes struck against corslets, swords rung on helmets; and the ponderous battle-axe, falling with the weight of fate, cleft the uplifted target in twain. Blood spouted on every side; and the dripping hands of Kirkpatrick, as Wallace tore him from the enemy, proclaimed that he had bathed his vengeance in the stream. On being released, he shook his ensanguined arms, and burst into a horrid laugh: 'The work speeds! Now through the heart of the governor!'

Even while he spoke, Wallace lost him again from his side: and again, by the shouts of the Southrons, who cried, 'No quarter for the rebel!' he learnt he must be retaken.

That merciless cry was the death-bell of their own doom. It directed Wallace to the spot; and throwing himself and his brethren of Lanark, into the midst of the band which held the prisoner, Kirkpatrick was again rescued. But thousands seemed now surrounding the chief himself. To do this generous deed, he had advanced further than he ought; and himself and his brave followers, must have been slain, had he not recoiled back; and covering their rear with the great tower, all who had the hardihood to approach, fell under the weight of the Scottish claymore.

Scrymgeour, at the head of the Loch Doine men, in vain attempted to reach this contending party; and fearful of losing the royal standard, he was turning to make a valiant retreat, when Murray and Edwin (having disengaged their followers from the precipices of the beacon rock) rushed into the fray, striking their shields, and uttering the inspiring *slogan* of 'Wallace and Freedom!' It was re-echoed by every Scot: those that were flying, returned; they who sustained the conflict, hailed the cry with braced sinews; and the terrible thunder of the word, pealing from rank to rank, struck a terror into De Valence's men, which made them pause. The extinction of the beacon, made them still more aghast.

On that short moment, turned the crisis of their fate. Wallace cut his way forward through the dismayed Southrons; who, hearing the reiterated shouts of the fresh reinforcement, knew not whether its strength might not be thousands instead of hundreds, and panic-struck they became an easy prey to their enemies. Surrounded, mixed with their assailants, they knew not friends from foes; and each individual being bent on flight, they indiscriminately cut to right and left, wounding as many of their own men, as of the Scots; and finally, after slaughtering half their companions, some few escaped through the small posterns of the garrison; leaving the inner ballia entirely in possession of the foe.

The whole of the field being cleared, Wallace ordered the tower to be forced. A strong guard was still within; and, as the assailants drew near, every means were used to render their assaults abortive. As the Scots pressed to the main entrance, stones and heavy metals were thrown upon their heads; but not in the least intimidated, they stood beneath the iron shower, till Wallace ordered them to drive a large felled tree, which lay on the ground, against the hinges of the door: it burst open, and the whole party rushed into the hall.

A short, sanguinary, but decisive conflict took place. The hauberk and plaid of Wallace were dyed from head to foot: his own brave blood, and the ferocious stream from his enemies, mingled in one horrid hue upon his garments.

'Wallace! Wallace!' cried the stentorian lungs of Kirkpatrick. In a moment Wallace was at his side, and found him wrestling with two men. The light of a single lamp, suspended from the rafters, fell direct upon the combatants. A dagger was pointed at the life of the old knight; but Wallace laid the holder of it dead across the body of his intended victim; and catching the other assailant by the throat, threw him prostrate to the ground.

'Spare me, for the honour of knighthood!' cried the conquered.

'For my honour, you shall die!' cried Kirkpatrick. His sword was already at the heart of the Englishman. Wallace beat it back. 'Kirkpatrick, he is my prisoner, and I give him life.'

'You know not what you do,' cried the old knight, struggling with Wallace, to release his sword-arm. 'This is De Valence!' 'Quarter!' reiterated the panting, and hard-pressed Earl. 'Noble Wallace, my life! For I am wounded.'

'Sooner take my own!' cried the determined Kirkpatrick, fixing his foot on the neck of the prostrate man, and trying to wrench his hand from the grasp of his commander.

'Shame!' cried Wallace: 'you must strike through me to kill any wounded man I hear cry for quarter! Release the Earl, for your own honour.'

'Our safety lies in his destruction!' cried Kirkpatrick; and enraged at opposition, he thrust his commander (little expecting such an action) from off the body of the Earl. De Valence seized his advantage, and catching Kirkpatrick by the limb that pressed on him, overthrew him; and by a sudden spring, turning quickly on Wallace, struck his dagger into his side. All this was done in an instant. Wallace did not fall; but staggering with the weapon sticking in the wound, he was so surprised by the baseness of the deed, he could not give the alarm till its perpetrator had disappeared.

The [illegible] Earl took his course through a narrow passage between the works; and proceeding swiftly towards the south, issued safely at one of the outer ballium gates; that part of the castle being now solitary, all the men having been drawn from the walls to the contest within; and thence he made his escape in a fisher's boat across the Clyde.

Meanwhile, Wallace having recovered himself, just as the Scots brought in lighted torches from the lower apartments of the tower, saw Sir Roger Kirkpatrick leaning sternly on his blood-dripping sword; and the young Edwin, coming forward in garments too nearly the hue of his own. Andrew Murray stood already by his side. Wallace's hand was upon the hilt of the dagger, which the ungrateful De Valence had left in his breast. 'You are wounded! you are slain!' cried Murray, in a voice of consternation. Edwin stood motionless with horror.

'That dagger!' exclaimed Scrymgeour—

'Has done nothing,' replied Wallace, 'but let me a little more blood.' As he spoke, he drew it out, and thrusting the corner of his scarf into his bosom, stanched the wound.

'So is your mercy rewarded!' exclaimed Kirkpatrick.

'So am I true to a soldier's duty,' returned Wallace, 'though De Valence is a traitor to his!'

'You treated him as a man,' replied Kirkpatrick: 'but now you find him a treacherous fiend!'

'Your eagerness, my brave friend,' returned Wallace, 'has lost him as a prisoner. If not for humanity, or honour, for policy's sake we ought to have spared his life; and detained him an hostage for our own countrymen in England.'

Kirkpatrick remembered how his violence had released the Earl, and he looked down abashed. Wallace, perceiving it, continued, 'But let us not abuse our time discoursing on a coward. He is gone; the fortress is ours; and our first measure must be to guard it from surprise.'

As he spoke, his eyes fell upon Edwin; who having recovered from the shock of Murray's exclamation, had brought forward the surgeon of their little band. A few minutes bound up the wounds of their chief, even while beckoning the anxious boy towards him. 'Brave youth,' cried he, 'you, who have fought like a young lion in this unequal contest! here, in the face of all your valiant comrades, receive that knighthood, which rather derives lustre from your virtues, than gives additional consequence to your name.'

With a bounding heart Edwin bent his knee: and Wallace, giving him the hallowed accolade,[1] the young knight rose from his position with all the roses of his springing fame glowing in his countenance. Scrymgeour presented him the knightly girdle,[2] which he unbraced from his own loins; and while the happy boy received the sword to which it was attached, he exclaimed with animation: 'While I follow the example before my eyes, I shall never draw this in an unjust cause, nor ever sheath it in a just one.'

[1] Accolade, the three strokes of the sword given in knighting.

[2] It was the custom in Scotland, on investing a knight, to present him, along with the sword and consecrated spurs, a girdle of the same sanctity. —(1809.)

'Go then,' returned Wallace, smiling his approval of this sentiment, 'while work is to be done, I will keep my knight to the toil; go, and with twenty men of Lanark, guard the wall by which we ascended.'

Edwin disappeared, and Wallace, having despatched detachments to occupy other parts of the garrison, took a torch in his hand, and turning to Murray, proposed seeking the Earl of Mar. Lord Andrew was soon at the iron door which led from the hall to the principal stairs.

'We must have our friendly battering ram here,' cried he; 'a close prisoner do they indeed keep my uncle, when even the inner doors are bolted on him!'

The men dragged the tree forward, and striking it against the iron, it burst open with the noise of thunder. Shrieks from within followed the sound. The women of Lady Mar, not knowing what to suppose during the uproar of the conflict, now hearing the door forced, expected nothing less than that some new enemies were advancing; and, giving themselves up to despair, they flew into the room where the Countess sat in equal though less clamorous terror.

At the shouts of the Scots, when they began the attack, the Earl had started from his couch. 'That is not peace!' said he; 'there is some surprise!'

'Alas! from whom?' returned Lady Mar; 'who would venture to attack a fortress like this, garrisoned with thousands?'

The cry was repeated.

'It is the slogan of Sir William Wallace!' cried he; 'I shall be free! O, for a sword! Hear! hear!'

As the shouts redoubled, and, mingled with the various clangours of battle, drew nearer the tower, the impatience of the Earl could not be restrained. Hope and eagerness seemed to have dried up his wounds, and new-strung every nerve, while unarmed as he was he rushed from the apartment, and hurried down the stairs which led to the iron door. He found it so firmly fastened by bars and

padlocks he could not move it. Again he ascended to his terrified wife; who, conscious how little obligation Wallace owed to her, perhaps dreaded even more to see her husband's hopes realised, than to find herself yet more rigidly the prisoner of the haughty De Valence.

'Joanna!' cried he, 'the arm of God is with us. My prayers are heard; Scotland will yet be free. Hear those groans,—those shouts.—Victory! Victory!'

As he thus echoed the cry of triumph, uttered by the Scots when bursting open the outer gate of the tower, the foundations of the building shook, and Lady Mar, almost insensible with terror, received the exhausted body of her husband into her arms; he fainted from the transport his weakened frame was unable to bear. Soon after this the stair door was forced, and the panic struck women ran shrieking into the room to their mistress.

The Countess could not speak, but sat pale and motionless, supporting his head on her bosom. Guided by the noise, Lord Andrew flew into the room, and rushing towards his uncle, fell at his feet. 'Liberty! Liberty!' was all he could say. His words pierced the ear of the Earl like a voice from Heaven; and looking up, without a word he threw his arms round the neck of his nephew.

Tears relieved the contending feelings of the Countess; and the women, recognising the young Lord of Bothwell, retired into a distant corner, well assured they had now no cause for fear.

The Earl rested but a moment on the panting breast of his nephew: when, gazing round to seek the mighty leader of the band, he saw Wallace enter, with the step of security, and triumph in his eyes.

'Ever my deliverer!' cried the venerable Mar, stretching forth his arms. The next instant he held Wallace to his breast; and remembering all that he had lost for his sake since they parted, a soldier's heart melted, and he burst into tears. 'Wallace, my preserver; thou victim for Scotland, and for me;—or rather, thou chosen of Heaven! who,

by the sacrifice of all thou didst hold dear on earth, art made a blessing to thy country!—receive my thanks, and my heart.'

Wallace felt all in his soul which the Earl meant to imply; but recovering the calmed tone of his mind, before he was released from the embrace of his friend; when he raised himself, and replied to the acknowledgments of the Countess, it was with a serene, though glowing countenance.

The joy of the venerable chief was unbounded when he found that a handful of Scots had put two thousand Southrons to flight, and gained entire possession of the castle. Wallace, having satisfied the anxious questions of his noble auditor, gladly perceived the morning light. He rose from his seat. 'I shall take a temporary leave of you, my Lord,' said he to the Earl: 'I must now visit my brave comrades at their posts; and see the colours of Scotland planted on the citadel.'

CHAPTER XV

THE GREAT TOWER

When Wallace withdrew, Lady Mar, who had detained Murray, whispered to him, while a blush stained her cheek, that she should like to be present at the planting of the standard. Lord Mar declared his willingness to accompany her to the spot, and added; 'I can be supported thither by the arm of Andrew.' Murray hesitated. 'It will be impossible for my aunt to go; the hall below, and the ground before the tower, are covered with slain.'

'Let them be cleared away!' cried she; 'for I cannot consent to be deprived of a spectacle so honourable to my country.'

Murray regarded the pitiless indifference with which she gave this order with amazement: 'To do that, madam,' said he, 'is beyond my power; the whole ceremony of the

colours would be completed long before I could clear the earth of half its bleeding load. I will seek a passage for you by some other way.'

Before the Earl could make a remark, Murray had disappeared; and after exploring the lower part of the tower in unavailing search for a way, he met Sir Roger Kirkpatrick issuing from a small door; which, being in shadow, he had hitherto overlooked. It led through the ballium, to the platform before the citadel. Lord Andrew returned to his uncle and aunt, and informing them of this discovery, gave his arm to Lord Mar, while Kirkpatrick led forward the agitated Countess. At this moment the sun rose behind the purple summit of Ben Lomond.

When they approached the citadel, Wallace and Sir Alexander Scrymgeour had just gained its summit. The standard of Edward was yet flying. Wallace looked at it for a moment; then laying his hand on the staff, 'Down, thou red dragon,' cried he, 'and learn to bow before the Giver of all victory!' Even while speaking, he rent it from the roof; and casting it over the battlements, planted the Lion of Scotland in its stead.

As its vast evolvements floated on the air, the cry of triumph, the loud clarion of honest triumph, burst from every heart, horn, and trumpet below. It was a shout that pierced the skies; and entered the soul of Wallace with a bliss which seemed a promise of immortality.

'O God!' cried he, still grasping the staff, and looking up to heaven; 'we got not this in possession, through our own might; but Thy right hand, and the light of Thy countenance, overthrew the enemy! Thine the conquest, Thine the glory!'

'Thus we consecrate the day to Thee, Power of Heaven!' rejoined Scrymgeour: 'and let this standard be Thine own; and whithersoever we bear it, may we ever find it as the ark of our God!'

Wallace, feeling as if no eye looked on them but that of Heaven, dropped on his knee; and rising again, took Sir

Alexander by the hand: 'My brave friend,' said he, 'we have here planted the tree of freedom in Scotland. Should I die in its defence, swear to bury me under its branches; swear that no enslaved ground shall cover my remains.'

'I swear,' cried Scrymgeour, laying his crossed hands upon the arm of Wallace; 'I swear with a double vow: by the blood of my brave ancestors, whose valour gave me the name I bear; by the cross of Saint Andrew; and by your valiant self; never to sheath my sword while I have life in my body, until Scotland be entirely free!'

The colours fixed, Wallace and his brave colleague descended the tower; and perceiving the Earl and Countess, who sat on a stone bench at the end of the platform, approached them. The Countess rose as the chiefs drew near. Lord Mar took his friend by the hand with a gratulation in his eyes that was unutterable: his lady spoke, hardly conscious of what she said; and Wallace, after a few minutes' discourse, proposed to the Earl to retire with Lady Mar into the citadel; where she would be more suitably lodged than in their late prison. Lord Mar was obeying this movement, when suddenly stopping, he exclaimed,—'But where is that wondrous boy?—your pilot over these perilous rocks?—let me give him a soldier's thanks.'

Happy at so grateful a demand, Wallace beckoned Edwin, who, just relieved from his guard, was standing at some distance. 'Here,' said he, 'is my knight of fifteen! for last night he proved himself more worthy of his spurs than many a man who has received them from a king.'

'He shall wear those of a king,' rejoined the Lord Mar, unbuckling from his feet a pair of golden spurs; 'these were fastened on my heels by our great King Alexander, at the battle of Largs. I had intended them for my only son; but the first knight in the cause of rescued Scotland, is the son of my heart and soul!'

As he spoke, he would have pressed the young hero to his breast; but Edwin, trembling with emotion, slid down

upon his knees, and clasping the Earl's hand, said in a hardly audible voice: 'Receive, and pardon, the truant son of your sister Ruthven!'

'What!' exclaimed the veteran, 'is it Edwin Ruthven that has brought me this weight of honour? Come to my arms, thou dearest child of my dearest Janet!'

The uncle and nephew were folded in each other's embrace. Lady Mar wept; and Wallace, unable to bear the remembrance which such a scene pressed upon his heart, turned away towards the battlements. Edwin murmured a short explanation in the ear of his uncle; and then rising from his arms, with his beautiful face glittering like an April day in tears, allowed his gay cousin Murray to buckle the royal spurs on his feet. The rite over, he kissed Lord Andrew's hand in token of acknowledgment; and called on Sir William Wallace to bless the new honours conferred on his knight.

Wallace turned towards Edwin with a smile, which partook more of heaven than earth; 'Have we not performed our mutual promises?' said he: 'I brought you to the spot where you were to reveal your name; and you have declared it to me by the voice of glory! Come, then, my brother, let us leave your uncle awhile, to seek his repose.'

As he spoke he bowed to the Countess; and Edwin joyfully receiving his arm, they walked together towards the eastern postern.

Agitated with the delightful surprise of thus meeting his favourite sister's son (whom he had never seen since his infancy), and exhausted by the variety of his late emotions, the Earl readily acquiesced in a proposal for rest, and leaning on Lord Andrew, proceeded to the citadel.

The Countess had other attractions: lingering at the side of the rough knight of Torthorald, she looked back; and when she saw the object of her gaze disappear through the gates, she sighed; and turning to her conductor, walked by him in silence, till they joined her husband in the hall

of the keep. Murray led the way into the apartments lately occupied by De Valence. They were furnished with all the luxury of a Southron nobleman. Lady Mar cast her eyes around the splendid chamber, and seated herself on one of its tapestried couches. The Earl, not marking whether it were silk or rushes, placed himself beside her. Murray drew a stool towards them, while Kirkpatrick, tired of his gallant duty, abruptly took his leave.

'My dear Andrew,' said the Earl, 'in the midst of this proud rejoicing, there is yet a canker at my heart. Tell me, that when my beloved Helen disappeared in the tumult at Bothwell, she was under your protection?'

'She was,' replied Murray; 'and I thank the holy Saint Fillan, she is now in the sanctuary of his church.'

Murray then recounted to his relieved uncle, every event, from the moment of his withdrawing behind the arras, to that of his confiding the English soldier, with the iron box, to the care of the prior. Lord Mar sighed heavily, when he spoke of that mysterious casket. 'Whatever it contain,' said he, 'it has drawn after it much evil and much good. The domestic peace of Wallace was ruined by it; and the spirit which now restores Scotland to herself, was raised by his wrongs!'

'But tell me,' added he, 'do you think my daughter safe, so near a garrison of the enemy?'

'Surely, my Lord,' cried the Countess, too well remembering the enthusiasm with which Helen had regarded, even the unknown Wallace; 'surely you would not bring that tender child into a scene like this! Rather send a messenger to convey her secretly to Thirlestan; at that distance she will be safe, and under the powerful protection of her grandfather.'

The Earl acquiesced in her opinion; and saying he would consult with Wallace, about the securest mode of travel for his daughter; again turned to Lord Andrew, to learn further of their late proceedings. But the Countess still uneasy, once more interrupted him.

'Alas! my Lord, what would you do? His generous zeal will offer to go in person for your daughter. We know not what dangers he might then incur; and surely the champion of Scotland, is not to be thrown into peril for any domestic concern! If you really feel the weight of the evils into which you have plunged Sir William Wallace, do not increase it, by even hinting to him the present subject of your anxiety.'

'My aunt is an oracle!' resumed Murray. 'Allow me to be the happy knight, that is to bear the surrender of Dumbarton to my sweet cousin. Prevail on Wallace to remain in this garrison till I return; and then full tilt for the walls of old Stirling, and the downfall of Hughie Cressingham!'

Both the Countess and the Earl were pleased with this arrangement. The latter, by the persuasions of his nephew, retired into an inner chamber to repose; and the former desired Lord Andrew to inform Wallace, that she should expect to be honoured with his presence at noon, to partake of such fare as the garrison afforded.

On Murray's coming from the citadel, he learnt that Wallace was gone towards the great tower. He followed him thither; and on issuing from the postern which led to that part of the rock, saw the chief standing with his helmet off, in the midst of the slain.

'This is a sorry sight!' said he to Murray, as he approached; 'but it shall not long lie thus exposed. I have just ordered that these sad wrecks of human strife may be lowered into the Clyde; its rushing stream will soon carry them to a quiet grave, beneath yon peaceful sea.' His own dead, amounting to no more than fifteen, were to be buried at the foot of the rock: a prisoner in the castle having described steps in the cliff, by which the solemnity could easily be performed.

'But why, my dear commander,' cried Lord Andrew, 'why do you take any thought about our enemies? Leave them where they are, and the eagles of our mountains will soon find them graves.'

'For shame, Murray!' was the reply of Wallace; 'they are dead, and our enemies no more. They are men like ourselves; and shall we deny them a place in that earth, whence we all sprung? We war not with human nature: are we not rather the assertors of her rights?'

'I know,' replied Lord Andrew, blushing, 'that I am often the assertor of my own folly; and I do not know how you will forgive my inconsiderate impertinence.'

'Because it was inconsiderate!' replied Wallace. 'Inhumanity is too stern a guest, to live in such a breast as yours.'

When all the slain were lowered to their last beds, a young priest, who came in the company of Scrymgeour, gave the funeral benediction, both to the departed in the waves, and those whom the shore had received. The rites over, Murray again drew near to Wallace, and delivered his aunt's message. 'I shall obey her commands,' returned he.

The Countess, having arrayed herself with all her powers to receive her deliverer, awaited the hour of his arrival with an emotion at her heart, which made it bound against her bosom, when she saw the object of her splendid toil, advancing along the court-yard. All others were lost to her impatient eyes; and hastily rising from the window as the chiefs entered the porch, she crossed the room to meet them at the door.

The Earl of Lennox, attracted thither by the sight of the Scottish colours, stood amazed, at sight of so much beauty and splendour, in such a scene. Lady Mar had hardly attained her thirty-fifth year; but from the graces of her person, and the address with which she set forth all her charms, the enchanted gazer found it impossible to suppose her more than three or four and twenty. Thus happily formed by nature, and habited in a suit of velvet, overlaid with Cyprus-work of gold; blazing with jewels about her head; and her feet clad in silver-fretted sandals; Lennox thought she looked more like some triumphant queen, than a wife who had so lately shared captivity

with an outlawed husband.[1] Murray started at such unexpected magnificence in his aunt. But Wallace scarcely observed it was anything unusual; and bowing to her, presented the Earl of Lennox. She smiled; and saying a few words of welcome to the Earl, gave her hand to Wallace, to lead her back into the chamber.

Lord Mar had risen from his seat; and leaning on his sword (for his warlike arm refused any other staff), stood up on their entrance. At sight of Lord Lennox, he uttered an exclamation of glad surprise. Lennox embraced him:—'I too, am come to enlist under the banners of this young Leonidas.'

'God armeth the patriot;' was all the reply that Mar made, while the big tears rolled over his cheek, and he shook him by the hand.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CITADEL

During the repast, the Countess often fixed her unrestrained gaze on the manly, yet youthful countenance of the heroic Wallace. His plumed helmet was now laid aside; and the heavy corslet unbuckled from his breast, disclosing the symmetry of his fine form, left its graceful movements to be displayed with advantage by the flexible folds of his simple tartan vest. Was it the formidable Wallace she looked on;—bathed in the blood of Heselrigge, and breathing vengeance against the adherents of the tyrant Edward?—It was then, the enemy of her kinsmen of the house of Cummin! It was the man, for whom her husband had embraced so many dangers! It was the man whom she had denounced to one of those kinsmen; and whom she had betrayed to the hazard of an ignominious

[1] This was the style for state dress, worn by noble ladies in the thirteenth century; the crusades having introduced much gorgeous apparel. —(1809.)

death! But where, now, was the fierce rebel,—the ruiner of her peace,—the outlaw whom she had wished in his grave?

The last idea was distraction. She could have fallen at his feet, and bathing them with her tears, have implored his pity and forgiveness. Even as the wish sprung in her mind she asked herself—'Did he know all, could he pardon such a weight of injuries?' She cast her eyes with a wild expression upon his face. The mildness of heaven was there; and the peace too, she might have thought, had not his eye carried a chastened sadness in its look, which told that something dire and sorrowful was buried deep within. It was a look that dissolved the soul which gazed on it. The Countess felt her heart throb violently. At that moment Wallace addressed a few words to her, but she knew not what they were; her soul was in tumults, and a mist passed over her sight, which, for a moment, seemed to wrap all her senses in a trance.

The unconscious object of these emotions, bowed to her inarticulate reply; supposing that the mingling voices of others, had made him hear hers indistinctly.

Lady Mar found her situation so strange, and her agitation so inexplicable, that feeling it impossible to remain longer without giving way to a burst of tears, she rose from her seat, and forcing a smile with her curtsey to the company, left the room.

On gaining the upper apartment, she threw herself along the nearest couch, and striking her breast, exclaimed, 'What is this within me? How does my soul seem to pour itself out to this man! Oh! how does it extend itself, as if it would absorb his, even at my eyes! Only twelve hours—hardly twelve hours, have I seen this William Wallace, and yet my very being is now lost in his!'

While thus speaking, she covered her face with her handkerchief, but no tears now started to be wiped away. The fire in her veins dried their source, and with burning blushes she rose from her seat. 'Fatal, fatal hour! Why didst thou come here, too infatuating Wallace, to rob me

of my peace? O! why did I ever look on that face?—or rather, blessed saints!' cried she, clasping her hands in wild passion, 'why did I ever shackle this hand?—why did I ever render such a sacrifice necessary! Wallace is now free; had I been free?—But wretch, wretch, wretch:—I could tear out this betrayed heart!—I could trample on that of the infatuating husband, that made me such a slave!' She gasped for breath, and again seating herself, reclined her beating temples against the couch.

She was now silent; but thoughts, not less intense, not less fraught with self-reproach and anguish, occupied her mind. Should this god of her idolatry ever discover that it was her information, which had sent Earl de Valence's men to surround him in the mountains; should he ever learn that at Bothwell, she had betrayed the cause on which he had set his life; she felt that moment would be her last. For now to sate her eyes with gazing on him, to hear the sound of his voice, to receive his smiles, seemed to her, a joy she could only surrender with her existence. What then was the prospect of so soon losing him, even to crown himself with honour, but to her a living death!

To defer his departure, was all her study,—all her hope; and fearful that his restless valour might urge him to accompany Murray in his intended convoy of Helen to the Tweed, she determined to persuade her nephew to set off without the knowledge of his general. She did not allow that it was the youthful beauty, and more lovely mind of her daughter-in-law, which she feared; even to herself she cloaked her alarm, under the plausible excuse of care for the chieftain's safety. Composed by this mental arrangement, her disturbed features became smooth; and with even a sedate air, she received her lord, and his brave friends, when they soon after entered the chamber.

But the object of her wishes did not appear. Wallace had taken Lord Lennox to view the dispositions of the fortress. Ill satisfied as she was with his prolonged absence, she did not fail to turn it to advantage; and

while her lord and his friends were examining a draft of Scotland (which Wallace had sketched after she left the banqueting-room), she took Lord Andrew aside, to converse with him on the subject, now nearest to her heart.

'It certainly belongs to me alone, her kinsman and friend, to protect Helen to the Tweed, if there she must go,' returned Murray; 'but, my good lady, I cannot comprehend why I am to lead my fair cousin such a pilgrimage. She is not afraid of heroes! you are safe in Dumbarton; and why not bring her here also?'

'Not for worlds?' exclaimed the Countess, thrown off her guard. Murray looked at her with surprise. It recalled her to self-possession, and she resumed. 'So lovely a creature, in this castle, would be a dangerous magnet. You must have known, that it was the hope of obtaining her, which attracted the Lord Soulis, and Earl de Valence to Bothwell. The whole castle rung with the quarrel of these two lords, upon her account, when you so fortunately effected her escape. Should it be known that she is here, the same fierce desire of obtaining her, would give double excitement to De Valence to recover the place; and the consequences who can answer for?'

By this argument Murray was persuaded to relinquish the idea of conveying Helen to Dumbarton; but remembering what Wallace had said respecting the safety of a religious sanctuary, he advised that she should be left at St. Fillan's, till the cause of Scotland might be more firmly established. 'Send a messenger to inform her of the rescue of Dumbarton, and of your and my uncle's health,' continued he; 'and that will be sufficient to make her happy.'

That she was not to be thrown in Wallace's way, satisfied Lady Mar; and indifferent whether Helen's seclusion were under the Eildon tree, or the Holyrood, she approved Murray's decision. Relieved from apprehension, her face became again dressed in smiles; and, with a bounding step, she rose to welcome the re-entrance of Wallace, with the Earl of Lennox.

Absorbed in one thought, every charm she possessed was directed to the same point. She played finely on the lute, and sung with all the grace of her country. What gentle heart was not to be affected by music? She determined it should be one of the spells by which she meant to attract Wallace. She took up one of the lutes, (which with other musical instruments decorated the apartments of the luxurious De Valence,) and touching it with exquisite delicacy, breathed the most pathetic air her memory could dictate.

'If on the heath she moved, her breast was whiter than the down of Cana;
If on the sea-beat shore, than the foam of the rolling ocean.
Her eyes were two stars of light. Her face was heaven's bow in showers;
Her dark hair flowed around it, like the streaming clouds.
Thou werst the dweller of souls, white handed Strinadona!'

Wallace rose from his chair, which had been placed near her. She had designed that these tender words of the bard of Morven, should suggest to her hearer the observation of her own resembling beauties. But he saw in them, only the lovely *dweller of his own soul;* and walking towards a window, stood there with his eyes fixed on the descending sun. 'So hath set all my joys. So is life to me, a world without a sun,—cold, cold, and charmless!'

The Countess vainly believed that some sensibility advantageous to her new passion, had caused the agitation with which she saw him depart from her side; and, intoxicated with the idea, she ran through many a melodious descant, till touching on the first strains of *Thusa ha measg na reultan mor,* she saw Wallace start from his contemplative position, and with a pale countenance leave the room. There was something in this abruptness, which excited the alarm of the Earl of Lennox, who had also been listening to the songs: he rose instantly, and overtaking the chief at the threshold, inquired what was the matter? 'Nothing,' answered Wallace, forcing a smile in which the agony of his mind was too truly imprinted; 'but

music displeases me.' With this reply he disappeared. The excuse seemed strange, but it was true; for her, whose notes were to him sweeter than the thrush; whose angel strains, used to greet his morning and evening hours, was silent in the grave! He should no more see her *white hand* upon the lute; he should no more behold that bosom, brighter than *foam upon the wave*, heave in tender transport at his applause! What then was music to him? A soulless sound; or a direful knell, to recall the remembrance of all he had lost.

Such were his thoughts, when the words of *Thusa ha measg* rung from Lady Mar's voice. Those were the strains which Halbert used to breathe from his harp, to call his Marion to her nightly slumbers:—those were the strains with which that faithful servant had announced, that she slept to wake no more!

What wonder, then, that Wallace fled from the apartment and buried himself, and his aroused grief, amid the distant solitudes of the beacon-hill!

While looking over the shoulder of his uncle, on the station which Stirling held amid the Ochil hills, Edwin had at intervals cast a side-long glance upon the changing complexion of his commander; and no sooner did he see him hurry from the room, than fearful of some disaster having befallen the garrison, (which Wallace did not choose immediately to mention), he also stole out of the apartment.

After seeking the object of his anxiety for a long time without avail, he was returning on his steps, when attracted by the splendour of the moon silvering the beacon-hill, he ascended, to, once at least, tread that acclivity in light, which he had so miraculously passed in darkness. Scarce a zephyr fanned the sleeping air. He moved on with a flying step, till a deep sigh arrested him. He stopped and listened: it was repeated again and again. He gently drew nearer, and saw a human figure reclining on the ground. The head of the apparent mourner was unbonneted, and the brightness of the moon shone on his polished forehead.

Edwin thought the sound of those sighs was the same he had often heard from the breast of Wallace, and he no longer doubted having found the object of his search. He walked forward. Again the figure sighed; but with a depth so full of piercing woe, that Edwin hesitated.

A cloud had passed over the moon; but sailing off again displayed to the anxious boy that he had indeed drawn very near his friend. 'Who goes there?' exclaimed Wallace, starting on his feet.

'Your Edwin,' returned the youth. 'I feared something wrong had happened, when I saw you look so sad, and leave the room abruptly.'

Wallace pressed his hand in silence. 'Then some evil had befallen you?' inquired Edwin, in an agitated voice; 'you do not speak!'

Wallace seated himself on a stone, and leaned his head upon the hilt of his sword. 'No new evil has befallen me, Edwin:—but there is such a thing as remembrance, that stabs deeper than the dagger's point, and that you may never love to idolatry, learn this also. Though Scotland lay in ruin, I was happy:—I felt no captivity, while in Marion's arms: even oppression was forgotten, when she made the sufferer's tears cease to flow. She absorbed my wishes, my thoughts, my life!—and she was wrested from me, that I might feel myself a slave; that the iron might enter into my soul, with which I was to pull down tyranny, and free my country. Mark the sacrifice, young man,' cried Wallace, starting on his feet; 'it even now smokes—and the flames are here inextinguishable.' He struck his hand upon his breast. 'Never love as I have loved; and you will be a patriot, without needing to taste my bitter cup!'

Edwin trembled: his tears were checked. 'I can love no one better than I do you, my general! and is there any crime in that?'

Wallace in a moment recovered from the transient wildness which had possessed him: 'None, my Edwin,' replied

he; 'the affections are never criminal, but when by their excess, they blind us to other duties. The offence of mine is judged, and I bow to the penalty. When that is paid, then may my ashes sleep in rescued Scotland!—Then may the God of victory, and of mercy, grant that the seraph spirits of my wife and infant, may meet my pardoned soul in paradise.' Edwin wept afresh. 'Cease, dear boy!' said he: 'these presages are very comforting; they whisper, that the path of glory leads thy brother to his home. As he spoke, he took the arm of the silent Edwin (whose sensibility locked up the powers of speech), and putting it through his, they descended the hill together.

On the open ground before the great tower, they were met by Murray. 'I come to seek you,' cried he: 'we have had woe on woe, in the citadel since you left it.

'Nothing very calamitous,' returned Wallace, 'if we may guess by the merry aspect of the messenger.'

'Only a little whirlwind of my aunt's; in which we have had airs, and showers, enough to wet us through, and blow us dry again.'

The conduct of the lady had been even more extravagant than her nephew chose to describe. After the knight's departure, when the chiefs entered into conversation respecting his future plans, and Lennox mentioned, that when his men should arrive (for whom he had that evening despatched Ker), it was Wallace's intention to march immediately for Stirling; whither it could hardly be doubted Aymer de Valence had fled. 'I shall be left here,' continued the Earl, 'to assist you, Lord Mar, in the severer duties attendant on being governor of this place.'

No sooner did these words reach the ears of the Countess than, struck with despair, she hastened towards her husband, and earnestly exclaimed—'You will not suffer this?'

'No,' returned the Earl, mistaking her meaning; 'not being able to perform the duties attendant on the responsible station with which Wallace would honour me,

I shall relinquish it altogether to Lord Lennox; and be amply satisfied in finding myself under his protection.'

'Ah, where is protection, without Sir William Wallace?' cried she. 'If he go, our enemies will return. Who then will repel them from these walls? Who will defend your wife, and only son, from falling again into the hands of our doubly incensed foes?'

Mar observed Lord Lennox colour, at this imputation on his bravery; and shocked at the affront which his unreflecting wife seemed to give so gallant a chief, he hastily replied, 'Though this wounded arm cannot boast, yet the Earl of Lennox is an able representative of our commander.'

'I will die, madam,' interrupted Lennox, 'before anything hostile approaches you or your children.'

On the return of Wallace, Lord Lennox advanced to meet him. 'What shall we do?' said he: 'Without you have the witchcraft of Hercules, and can be in two places at once, I fear we must either leave the rest of Scotland to fight for itself, or never restore peace to this castle!'

Wallace smiled; but before he could answer, Lady Mar, having heard his voice ascending the stairs, suddenly entered the room. She held her infant in her arms. Her air was composed, but her eyes yet shone in tears. At this sight, Lord Lennox, sufficiently disgusted with the lady, taking Murray by the arm, withdrew with him out of the apartment.

She approached Wallace: 'You are come, my deliverer, to speak comfort to the mother of this poor babe. My cruel lord here, and the Earl of Lennox, say you mean to abandon us in this castle?'

'It cannot be abandoned,' returned the chief, 'while they are in it. But if so warlike a scene alarms you, would not a religious sanctuary——'

'Not for worlds!' cried she, interrupting him; 'what altar is held sacred by the enemies of our country!—O! wonder not, then,' added she, putting her face to that of

her child, 'that I should wish this innocent babe never to be from under the wing of such a protector.'

'But that is impossible, Joanna,' rejoined the Earl; 'Sir William Wallace has duties to perform, superior to that of keeping watch over any private family. His presence is wanted in the field; and we should be traitors to the cause, did we detain him.'

'Unfeeling Mar,' cried she, bursting into tears, 'thus to echo the words of the barbarian, Kirkpatrick; thus to condemn us to die! You will see another tragedy; your own wife and child, seized by the returning Southrons, and laid bleeding at your feet!'

Wallace walked from her much agitated.

'Rather inhuman, Joanna,' whispered Lord Mar to her, in an angry voice, 'to make such a reference, in the presence of our protector! I cannot stay to listen to a pertinacity, as insulting to the rest of our brave leaders, as it is oppressive to Sir William Wallace. Edwin, you will come for me, when your aunt consents to be guided by right reason.' While yet speaking, he entered the passage that led to his own apartment.

Lady Mar sat a few minutes silent. She was not to be warned from her determination, by the displeasure of a husband, whom she now regarded with the impatience of a bondwoman towards her taskmaster; and only solicitous to compass the detention of Sir William Wallace, she resolved, if he would not remain at the castle, to persuade him to conduct her himself to her husband's territories in the Isle of Bute. She could contrive to make the journey occupy more than one day; and for holding him longer she would trust to chance, and her own inventions. With these resolutions, she looked up. Edwin was speaking to Wallace. 'What does he tell you?' said she, 'that my Lord has left me in displeasure? Alas! he comprehends not, a mother's anxiety for her sole remaining child. One of my sweet twins, my dear daughter, died on my being brought a prisoner to this horrid fortress; and

to lose this also, would be more than I could bear. Look at this babe,' cried she, holding it up to him; 'let it plead to you, for its life! Guard it, noble Wallace, whatever may become of me.'

The appeal of a mother, made instant way to Sir William's heart: even her weaknesses, did they point to anxiety respecting her offspring, were sacred with him: 'What would you have me do, madam? If you fear to remain here, tell me where you think you would be safer, and I will be your conductor?'

She paused, to repress the triumph with which this proposal filled her; and then with downcast eyes, replied:— 'In the sea-girt Bute stands Rothsay, a rude, but strong castle of my Lord's. It possesses nothing to attract the notice of the enemy; and there I might remain in perfect safety. Lord Mar may keep his station here, until a general victory sends you, noble Wallace, to restore my child to its father.'

Wallace bowed his assent to her proposal; and Edwin, remembering the Earl's injunction, inquired if he might inform him of what was decided. When he left the room, Lady Mar rose, and suddenly putting her son into the arms of Wallace:—'Let his sweet caresses thank you.' Wallace trembled, as she pressed its little mouth to his; and mistranslating this emotion, she dropped her face upon the infant's; and in affecting to kiss it, rested her head upon the bosom of the chief. There was something in this action, more than maternal; it surprised, and disconcerted Wallace. 'Madam,' said he, drawing back, and relinquishing the child, 'I do not require any thanks for serving the wife and son of Lord Mar.'

At that moment the Earl entered. Lady Mar, flattered herself that the repelling action of Wallace, and his cold answer, had arisen from the expectation of this entrance; yet blushing with something like disappointment, she hastily uttered a few agitated words, to inform her husband that Bute was to be her future sanctuary.

Lord Mar approved it; and declared his determination to accompany her. 'In my state, I can be of little use here,' said he; 'my family will require protection, even in that seclusion; and therefore, leaving Lord Lennox sole governor of Dumbarton, I shall unquestionably attend them to Rothsay myself.'

This arrangement would break in upon the lonely conversations she had meditated to have with Wallace, and therefore the Countess objected to the proposal. But none of her arguments being admitted by her lord, and as Wallace did not support them by a word, she was obliged to make a merit of necessity, and consent to her husband being their companion.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FRITH OF CLYDE

At Gourock, Murray engaged two small vessels; one for the Earl and Countess, with Wallace, as their escort; the other for himself and Edwin, to follow with a few of the men.

It was a fine evening, and they embarked with everything in their favour. The boatmen calculated on reaching Bute in a few hours; but ere they had been half an hour at sea, the wind veering about, obliged them to woo its breezes by a traversing motion; which, though it lengthened their voyage, increased its pleasantness, by carrying them often within near views of the ever-varying shores. Sailing under a side wind they beheld the huge irregular rocks of Dunoon, overhanging the ocean; while from their projecting brows, hung every shrub which can live in that saline atmosphere.

'There,' whispered Lady Mar, gently inclining towards Wallace; 'might the beautiful mermaid of Corie Vrekin keep her court! Observe how magnificently those arching cliffs overhang the hollows; and how richly they are studded with shells and sea-flowers!'

No flower of the field, or of the ocean, that came within the ken of Wallace, wasted its sweetness unadmired. He assented to the remarks of Lady Mar; who continued to expatiate on the beauties of the shores which they passed; and thus the hours fled pleasantly away, till turning the southern point of the Cowal mountains, the scene suddenly changed. The wind, which had gradually been rising, blew a violent gale from that part of the coast; and the sea being pent between the rocks which skirt the continent and the northern side of Bute, became so boisterous, that the boatmen began to think they should be driven upon the rocks of the island, instead of reaching its bay. Wallace tore down the sails; and laying his nervous arm to the oar, assisted to keep the vessel off the breakers, against which the waves were driving her. The sky collected into a gloom; and while the teeming clouds seemed descending, even to rest upon the cracking masts, the swelling of the ocean threatened to heave her up into their very bosoms.

Lady Mar looked with affright at the gathering tempest; and with difficulty was persuaded to retire under the shelter of a little awning. The Earl forgot his debility, in the the general terror, and tried to reassure the boatmen. But a tremendous sweep of the gale, driving the vessel far across the head of Bute, shot her past the mouth of Loch Fyne, towards the perilous rocks of Arran. 'Here our destruction is certain!' cried the master of the bark, at the same time confessing his ignorance of the navigation on this side of the island. Lord Mar, seizing the helm from the stupefied master, called to Wallace, 'While you keep the men to their duty,' cried he, 'I will steer.'

The Earl being perfectly acquainted with the coast, Wallace gladly saw the helm in his hand. But he had scarcely stepped forward himself, to give some necessary directions, when a heavy sea, breaking over the deck, carried two of the poor mariners overboard. Wallace instantly threw out a couple of ropes. Then, amidst a spray so blinding, that the vessel appeared in a cloud; and

while buffeted on each side by the raging of waves, which seemed contending to tear her to pieces, she lay to for a few minutes, to rescue the men from the yawning gulf;—one caught a rope, and was saved; but the other was seen no more.

Again the bark was set loose to the current. Wallace, now with two rowers only, applied his whole strength to their aid. The master, and the third man, were employed in the unceasing toil of laving out the accumulating water.

While the anxious chief tugged at the oar, and watched the thousand embattled cliffs which threatened destruction, his eye looked for the vessel that contained his friends. But the liquid mountains which rolled around him, prevented all view; and with hardly a hope of seeing them again, he pursued his attempt to preserve the lives of those committed to his care.

All this while Lady Mar lay in a state of stupefaction. Having fainted at the first alarm of danger, she had fallen from swoon to swoon; and now remained, almost insensible, upon the bosoms of her maids. In a moment the vessel struck with a great shock; and the next instant, it seemed to move with a velocity incredible.—'The whirlpool! the whirlpool!' resounded from every lip. But again the rapid motion was suddenly checked; and the women, fancying they had struck on the Vrekin rock, shrieked aloud. The cry, and the terrified words which accompanied it, aroused Lady Mar. She started from her trance, and while the confusion redoubled, rushed towards the dreadful scene.

The mountainous waves, and lowering clouds, borne forward by the blast, anticipated the dreariness of night. The last rays of the setting sun had long passed away; and the deep shadows of the driving heavens, cast the whole into a gloom, even more terrific than absolute darkness; while the high and beetling rocks, towering aloft in precipitous walls, mocked the hopes of the sea-beaten mariner, should he even buffet the waters to reach their base;

Wallace and Lady Mar in the Shipwreck

and the jagged shingles, deeply shelving beneath the waves, or projecting their pointed summits upward, showed the crew where the rugged death would meet them.

A little onward, a thousand massy fragments, rent by former tempests from their parent cliffs, lay at the foundations of the immense acclivities, which faced the cause of their present alarm; a whirlpool almost as terrific as that of Scarba. The moment the powerful blast drove the vessel within the influence of the outward edge of the first circle of the vortex, Wallace leaped from the deck, on the rocks; and with the same rope in his hand with which he had saved the life of the seaman, he called to the two men to follow him, who yet held similar ropes, fastened like his own to the prow of the vessel; and being obeyed, they strove, by towing it along, to stem the suction of the current.

It was at this instant, that Lady Mar rushed forward upon deck. 'In, for your life, Joanna!' exclaimed the Earl. She answered him not, but looked wildly around her. Nowhere could she see Wallace.

'Have I drowned him?' cried she in a voice of frenzy, and striking the women from her, who would have held her back: 'Let me clasp him, even in the deep waters!'

Happily, the Earl lost the last sentence in the roaring of the storm.

'Wallace, Wallace!' cried she, wringing her hands, and still struggling with her women. At that moment, a huge wave sinking before her, discovered the object of her fears, straining along the surface of a rock; and followed by the men in the same laborious task, tugging forward the ropes to which the bark was attached. She gazed at them with wonder and affright; for notwithstanding the beating of the elements (which seemed to find their breasts of iron, and their feet armed with some preternatural adhesion to the cliff), they continued to bear resolutely onward. Fortunately they did not now labour against the wind. Sometimes they pressed forward on the level edge of the rock;

then a yawning chasm forced them to leap from cliff to cliff, or to spring on some more elevated projection. Thus, contending with the vortex and the storm, they at last arrived at the doubling of Cuthonrock;[1] the point that was to clear them of this minor Corie Vrekin. But at that crisis, the rope which Wallace held, broke, and with the shock he fell backwards into the sea. The foremost man uttered a dreadful cry; but ere it could be echoed by his fellows, Wallace had risen above the waves; and beating their whelming waters with his invincible arm, soon gained the vessel, and jumped upon the deck. The point was doubled; but the next moment the vessel struck, and in a manner that left no hope of getting her off. All must take to the water, or perish; for the second shock would scatter her piecemeal.

Again Lady Mar appeared. At sight of Wallace, she forgot everything but him; and perhaps would have thrown herself into his arms, had not the anxious Earl caught her in his own.

'Are we to die?' cried she to Wallace, in a voice of horror.

'I trust that God has decreed otherwise,' was his reply. 'Compose yourself: all may yet be well.'

Lord Mar, from his yet unhealed wounds, could not swim: Wallace therefore tore up the benches of the rowers, and binding them into the form of a small raft, made it the vehicle for the Earl and Countess, with her two maids and the child. While the men were towing it, and buffeting with it, through the breakers, he too threw himself into the sea to swim by its side, and be in readiness in case of accident.

Having gained the shore, or rather the broken rocks that lie at the foot of the stupendous craigs which surround the Isle of Arran, Wallace and his sturdy assistants conveyed the Countess and her terrified women up their acclivities. Fortunately for the shipwrecked voyagers, though the wind raged, its violence was of some advantage,

[1]*Cuthon* means the *mournful sound of waves.*

for it nearly cleared the heavens of clouds, and allowed the moon to send forth her guiding light. By her lamp, one of the men discovered the mouth of a cavern; where Wallace gladly sheltered his dripping charges.

The child, whom he had guarded in his own arms during the difficult ascent, he now laid on the bosom of its mother. Lady Mar kissed the hand that relinquished it, and gave way to a flood of grateful tears.

The Earl, as he sank almost powerless against the side of the cave, yet had strength enough to press Wallace to his heart:—'Ever preserver of me and mine!' cried he; 'how must I bless thee!—My wife, my child—'

'Have been saved to you, my friend,' interrupted Wallace, 'by the presiding care of Him who walked the waves!—Without His especial arm, we must all have perished in this awful night; therefore let our thanksgivings be directed to Him alone.'

'So be it!' returned the Earl; and dropping on his knees, he breathed forth so pathetic and sublime a prayer of thanks, that the Countess trembled, and bent her head upon the bosom of her child. She could not utter the solemn *Amen*, that was repeated by every voice in the cave. Her unhappy infatuation saw no higher power in this great preservation, than the hand of the man she adored. She felt that guilt was cherished in her heart; and she could not lift her eyes, to join with those, who, with the boldness of innocence, called on Heaven to attest the sanctity of their vows.

Sleep soon sealed every weary eye, excepting those of Wallace. A racking anxiety respecting the fate of the other vessel, in which were the brave men of Bothwell, and his two dear friends, filled his mind with dreadful forebodings, that they had not outlived the storm.

While his companions were still wrapped in sleep, Wallace stole away, to seek some knowledge respecting the part of the Isle of Arran on which they were cast. Close by the mouth of the cave, he discovered a cleft in

the rock, into which he turned, and finding the upward footing sufficiently secure, clambered to the summit. Looking around, he found himself at the skirt of a chain of high hills, which seemed to stretch from side to side over the island, while their tops, in alpine succession, rose in a thousand grotesque and pinnacled forms. The ptarmigan and capperkaily were screaming from those upper regions; and the nimble roes, with their fawns, bounding through the green defiles below. No trace of human habitation appeared; but from the size, and known population of the island, he knew he could not be far from inhabitants; and thinking it best to send the boatmen in search of them, he retraced his steps. The morning vapours were fast rolling their snowy wreaths down the opposite mountains, whose heads, shining in resplendent purple, seemed to view themselves in the bright reflections of the now smooth sea. Nature, like a proud conqueror, appeared to have put on a triumphal garb, in exultation of the devastation she had committed the night before. Wallace shuddered, as the parallel occurred to his mind, and turned from the scene.

On re-entering the cave, he despatched the seamen, and disposed himself to watch by the sides of his still sleeping friends. An hour hardly had elapsed before the men returned, bringing with them a large boat and its proprietor. But, alas! no tidings of Murray and Edwin, whom he had hoped might have been driven somewhere on the island. In bringing the boat round to the creek under the rock, the men discovered that the sea had driven their wreck between two projecting rocks, where it now lay wedged. Though ruined as a vessel, sufficient held together to warrant their exertions to save the property. Accordingly they entered it, and drew thence most of the valuables which belonged to Lord Mar.

While this was doing, Wallace reascended to the cave; and finding the Earl awake, told him a boat was ready for their re-embarkation. 'But where, my friend, are my

nephews?' inquired he: 'Alas! has this fatal expedition robbed me of them!'

Wallace tried to inspire him with a hope he scarcely dared credit himself, that they had been saved on some more distant shore. The voices of the chiefs awakened the women; but the Countess still slept. Aware that she would resist trusting herself to the waves again, Lord Mar desired that she might be moved on board without disturbing her. This was readily done; the men having only to take up the extremities of the plaid on which she lay, and so carry her with an imperceptible motion, to the boat. The Earl received her head on his bosom. All were then on board; the rowers struck their oars, and once more the little party found themselves launched upon the sea.

While they were yet midway between the isles, with a bright sun playing its sparkling beams upon the gently rippling waves, the Countess, heaving a deep sigh, slowly opened her eyes. All around, glared with the light of day; she felt the motion of the boat, and raising her head, saw that she was again embarked on the treacherous element on which she had lately experienced so many terrors. She grew deadly pale, and grasped her husband's hand. 'My dear Joanna,' cried he, 'be not alarmed, we are all safe.'

'And Sir William Wallace has left us?' demanded she.

'No, madam,' answered a voice from the steerage, 'not till this party be safe at Bute, do I quit it.'

She looked round with a grateful smile: 'Ever generous! How could I for a moment doubt our preserver?'

Wallace bowed, but remained silent: and they passed calmly along, till the vessel came in sight of a birling;[1] which, bounding over the waves, was presently so near the Earl's, that the figures in each could be distinctly seen. In it, the chiefs, to their rapturous surprise, beheld Murray and Edwin. The latter with a cry of joy, leaped into the sea; the next instant he was over the boat's side, and clasped in the arms of Wallace. Real transport, true

[1] Birling is a small boat generally used by fishers.

happiness, now dilated the heart of the before desponding chief. He pressed the dear boy again and again to his bosom, and kissed his white forehead with all the rapture of the fondest brother. 'Thank God! thank God!' was all that Edwin could say.

While mutual felicitations passed, the boats, now nearly side by side, reached the shore; and the seamen, jumping on the rocks, moored their vessels under the projecting towers of Rothsay. The old steward hastened to receive a master, who had not blessed his aged eyes for many a year; and when he took the infant in his arms that was to be the future representative of the house of Mar, he wept aloud. The Earl spoke to him affectionately; and then walked on with Edwin, whom he called to support him up the bank. Murray led the Countess out of the boat; while the Bothwell men so thronged about Wallace, congratulating themselves on his safety, that she saw there was no hope of his arm being then offered to her.

Having entered the castle, the steward led them into a room, in which he had spread a plentiful repast. Here Murray (having recounted the adventures of his voyage) called for a history of what had befallen his friends. The Earl, gladly took up the tale; and, with many a glance of gratitude to Wallace, narrated the perilous events of their shipwreck, and providential preservation on the Isle of Arran.

Happiness now seemed to have shed her heavenly influence over every bosom. All hearts owned the grateful effects of the late rescue. The rapturous joy of Edwin burst into a thousand sallies of ardent and luxuriant imagination. The high spirits of Murray turned every transient subject into a 'mirth-moving jest.' The veteran Earl, seemed restored to health, and to youth; and Wallace felt the sun of consolation expanding in his bosom.

The complacency with which he regarded every one—the pouring out of his beneficent spirit, which seemed to embrace all, like his dearest kindred—turned every eye

and heart towards him, as to the source of every bliss; as to a being who seemed made to love, and be beloved by every one. Lady Mar looked at him, listened to him, with her rapt soul seated in her eye. In his presence all was transport.

But when he withdrew for the night, what was then the state of her feelings! The overflowing of heart, he felt for all, she appropriated solely to herself. The sweetness of his voice, the unutterable expression of his countenance, while, as he spoke, he veiled his eyes under their long brown lashes, had raised such vague hopes in her bosom, that—he being gone, she hastened her adieus to the rest, eager to retire to bed, and there uninterruptedly muse on the happiness of having at last touched the heart of a man for whom she would resign the world.

CHAPTER XVIII

ISLE OF BUTE

The morning would have brought annihilation to the Countess's new-fledged hopes, had not Murray been the first to meet her as she came from her chamber.

While walking on the cliffs at some distance from the castle, to observe the weather, he met Wallace and Edwin. They had already been across the valley to the haven, and ordered a boat round, to convey them back to Gourock. 'Postpone your flight, for pity's sake!' cried Murray, 'if you would not, by discourtesy, destroy what your gallantry has preserved!' He then told them that Lady Mar was preparing a feast in the glen, behind the castle; and 'if you do not stay to partake it,' added he, 'we may expect all the witches in the isle will be bribed to sink us before we reach the shore.'

After this, the general meeting of the morning was not less cordial than the separation of the night before; and when Lady Mar withdrew to give orders for her rural

banquet, that time was seized by the Earl for the arrangement of matters of more consequence. In a private conversation with Murray the preceding evening, he had learnt, that, just before the party left Dumbarton, a letter had been sent to Helen at St. Fillan's, informing her of the taking of the castle, and of the safety of her friends. This having satisfied the Earl, he did not advert to her at all, in his present discourse with Wallace; but rather avoided encumbering his occupied mind with anything but the one great theme.

While the Earl and his friends were marshalling armies, taking towns, and storming castles; the Countess, intent on other conquests, was meaning to beguile, and destroy, that manly spirit, by soft delights, which a continuance in war's rugged scenes, she thought, was too likely to render invulnerable.

When her lord and his guests were summoned to the feast, she met them at the mouth of the glen. Having tried the effect of splendour, she now left all to the power of her natural charms, and appeared simply clad in her favourite green.[1] Moraig, the pretty grandchild of the steward, walked beside her, like the fairy queen of the scene; so gaily was she decorated in all the flowers of spring. 'Here is the lady of my elfin revels, holding her little king in her arms!' As the Countess spoke, Moraig held up the infant of Lady Mar, dressed like herself, in a tissue gathered from the field. The sweet babe laughed and crowed, and made a spring to leap into Wallace's arms. The chief took him, and with an affectionate smile pressed his little cheek to his.

The repast over, the piper of the adjacent cottages appeared; and, placing himself on a projecting rock, at the carol of his merry instrument, the young peasants of both sexes jocundly came forward, and began to dance. At this sight, Edwin seized the little hand of Moraig; while Lord

[1] Green was the colour most worn by the ladies in the early ages of Scotland.

Andrew called a pretty lass from amongst the rustics, and joined the group. The happy Earl, with many a hearty laugh, enjoyed the jollity of his people: and while the steward stood at his lord's back, describing whose sons and daughters passed before him in the reel, Mar remembered their parents; their fathers, once his companions in the chase, or on the wave; and their mothers, the pretty maidens, he used to pursue over the hills, in the merry time of shealing.[1]

Lady Mar watched the countenance of Wallace, as he looked upon the joyous group; it was placid, and a soft complacency illumined his eye. How different was the expression in hers, had he marked it! All within her was in tumults; and the characters were but too legibly imprinted on her face. But he did not look on her; for the child, whom the perfume of the flowers overpowered, began to cry. He rose, and having resigned it to the nurse, turned into a narrow vista of trees; where he walked slowly on, unconscious whither he went.

Lady Mar, with an eager, though almost aimless haste, followed him with a light step, till she saw him turn out of the vista; and then she lost sight of him. To walk with him undisturbed, in so deep a seclusion; to improve the impression, which, she was sure, she had made upon his heart; to teach him to forget his Marion, in the hope of one day possessing her! All these thoughts ran in this vain woman's head:—and, inwardly rejoicing, that the shattered health of her husband, promised her a ready freedom to become the wife of the man to whom she would gladly belong, in honour or in dishonour; she hastened forward as if the accomplishment of her wishes depended on this meeting. Peeping through the trees, she saw him standing with folded arms, looking intently into the bosom of a large lake; but the place was so thickly surrounded with willows, she could only perceive him at intervals, when the wind tossed aside the branches.

[1] *Shealing*, the festival of the shepherds, when they went into the mountains, at a certain time of the year, to feed their flocks.

Having stood for some time, he walked on. Several times she essayed to emerge, and join him; but a sudden awe of him, a conviction of that saintly purity, which would shrink from the guilty vows she was meditating to pour into his ear, made her pause!—He might mistake her for his own dear Marion!—This image it was not her interest to recall. And to approach him near, to unveil her heart to him, and to be repulsed,—there was madness in the idea, and she retreated.

She had no sooner returned to the scene of festivity, than she repented having allowed what she deemed an idle alarm of overstrained delicacy, to drive her from the lake. —She would have hastened back, had not two or three aged female peasants almost instantly engaged her, in spite of her struggles for extrication, to listen to long stories respecting her lord's youth. She remained thus an unwilling auditor, and by the side of the dancers for nearly an hour, before Wallace reappeared. But then she sprang towards him, as if a spell were broken. 'Where, truant, have you been?'

'In a beautiful solitude,' returned he, 'amongst a luxuriant grove of willows.'

'Ay!' cried she, 'it is called Glenshealeach;[1] and a sad scene was acted there!—About ten years ago, a lady of this island drowned herself in the lake they hang over, because the man she loved—despised her.'

'Unhappy woman!' observed Wallace.

'Then you would have pitied her?' rejoined Lady Mar.

'He cannot be a man, that would not pity a woman, under such circumstances.'

'Then *you* would not have consigned her to such a fate?'

Wallace was startled by the peculiar tone in which this simple question was asked. It recalled the action in the citadel; and, unconsciously turning a penetrating look on her, his eyes met hers. He need not have heard further, to have learnt more. She hastily looked down, and

[1] *Glenshealeach* means *valley of willows.*

coloured; and he, wishing to misunderstand a language so disgraceful to herself, so dishonouring to her husband, gave some trifling answer; then making a slight observation about the Earl, he advanced to him. Lord Mar was become tired with so gala a scene; and, taking the arm of Wallace, they returned together into the house.

Edwin soon followed with Murray; gladly arriving time enough, to see their little pinnace draw up under the castle, and throw out her moorings. The Countess, too, descried its streamer; and hastening into the room, where she knew the chiefs were yet assembled, though the wearied Earl had retired to repose, inquired the reason of that boat having drawn so near the castle.

'That it may take us from it, fair aunt,' replied Murray.

The Countess fixed her eyes, with an unequivocal expression, upon Wallace. 'My gratitude is ever due to your kindness, noble lady,' said he, still wishing to be blind, to what he could not but perceive; 'and that we may ever deserve it, we go to keep the enemy from your doors.'

'Yes,' added Murray, 'and to keep a more insidious foe from our own! Edwin and I feel it rather dangerous, to bask too long in these sunny bowers.'

'But surely your chief is not afraid!' said she, casting a soft glance at Wallace.—'Yet, nevertheless, I must fly,' returned he, bowing to her.

'That you positively shall not,' added she, with a fluttering joy at her heart; thinking she was about to succeed:—'you stir not this night, else I shall brand you all as a band of cowards.'

'Call us by every name in the poltroon's calendar,' cried Murray, seeing by the countenance of Wallace that his resolution was not to be moved; 'yet I must gallop off from your black-eyed Judith, as if chased by the ghost of Holofernes himself.'—'So, dear aunt,' rejoined Edwin, smiling, 'if you do not mean to play Circe to our Ulysses, give us leave to go!' Lady Mar started, confused, she knew not how, as he innocently uttered these words. The animated

boy snatched a kiss from her hand, when he ceased speaking, and darted after Murray; who had disappeared, to give some speeding directions respecting the boat.

Left thus alone with the object of her every wish, in the moment when she thought she was going to lose him perhaps for ever, she forgot all prudence, all reserve; and laying her hand on his arm, as with a respectful bow he was also moving away, she arrested his steps. She held him fast; but agitation preventing her speaking, she trembled violently; and, weeping, dropped her head upon his shoulder.—He was motionless.—Her tears redoubled. —He felt the embarrassment of his situation; and at last extricating his tongue, which surprise and shame for her had chained, in a gentle voice he inquired the cause of her uneasiness. 'If for the safeties of your nephews—'

'No, no,' cried she, interrupting him; 'read my fate, in that of the lady of Glenshealeach!'

Again he was silent; astonished, fearful of too promptly understanding so disgraceful a truth, he found no words in which to answer her, and her emotions became so uncontrolled, that he expected she would swoon in his arms.

'Cruel, cruel Wallace!' at last cried she, clinging to him; for he had once or twice attempted to disengage himself, and reseat her on the bench; 'your heart is steeled, or it would understand mine. It would at least pity the wretchedness it has created. But I am despised,—and I can yet find the watery grave, from which you rescued me.'

To dissemble longer, would have been folly. Wallace, now resolutely seating her, though with gentleness, addressed her:—'Your husband, Lady Mar, is my friend: had I even a heart to give to woman, not one sigh should arise in it, to his dishonour. But I am lost to all warmer affections, than that of friendship. I may regard man as my brother, woman as my sister; but never more can I look on female form with love.'

Lady Mar's tears now flowed in a more tempered current.

'But were it otherwise,' cried she, 'only tell me, that had I not been bound with chains, which my kinsmen forced upon me; had I not been made the property of a man, who, however estimable, was of too paternal years for me to love; ah! tell me, if these tears should now flow in vain!'

Wallace seemed to hesitate what to answer.

Wrought up to agony, she threw herself on his breast, exclaiming, 'Answer! but drive me not to despair.—I never loved man before—and now to be scorned!—Oh, kill me, too dear Wallace, but tell me not, that you never could have loved me.'

Wallace was alarmed at her vehemence. 'Lady Mar,' returned he, 'I am incapable of saying anything to you, that is inimical to your duty to the best of men. I will even forget this distressing conversation; and continue through life to revere, equal with himself, the wife of my friend.'

'And I am to be stabbed with this?' replied she, in a voice of indignant anguish.

'You are to be healed with it, Lady Mar,' returned he; 'for it is not a man, like the rest of his sex, that now addresses you, but a being whose heart is petrified to marble. I could feel no throb of yours; I should be insensible to all your charms, were I even vile enough to see no evil in trampling upon your husband's rights. Yes, were virtue lost to me, still memory would speak; still would she urge, that the chaste, and last kiss, imprinted by my wife on these lips, should live there, in unblemished sanctity, till I again meet her angel embraces in the world to come!'

The Countess, awed by his solemnity, but not put from her suit, exclaimed, 'What she was, I would be to thee—thy consoler, thine adorer. Time may set me free. Oh! till then, only give me leave to love thee, and I shall be happy!'

'You dishonour yourself, lady,' returned he, 'by these petitions; and for what? You plunge your soul in guilty wishes—you sacrifice your peace, and your self esteem, to a phantom; for, I repeat, I am dead to woman; and the

voice of love, sounds like the funeral knell of her who will never breathe it to me again.' He rose as he spoke; and the Countess, pierced to the heart, and almost despairing of now retaining any part in his esteem, was devising what next to say, when Murray came into the room.

Wallace instantly observed that his countenance was troubled. 'What has happened?' inquired he.

'A messenger from the mainland, with bad news from Ayr.'

'Of private, or public import?' rejoined Wallace.

'Of both. There has been a horrid massacre, in which the heads of many noble families have fallen.' As he spoke, the paleness of his countenance revealed to his friend, that part of the information he had found himself unable to communicate.

'I comprehend my loss,' cried Wallace: 'Sir Ronald Crawford is sacrificed! Bring the messenger in.'

Murray withdrew; and Wallace, seating himself, remained with a fixed and stern countenance, gazing on the ground. Lady Mar durst not breathe, for fear of disturbing the horrid stillness which seemed to lock up his grief and indignation.

Lord Andrew re-entered with a stranger. Wallace rose to meet him; and seeing Lady Mar, 'Countess,' said he, 'these bloody recitals are not for your ears;' and waving her to withdraw, she left the room.

'This gallant stranger,' said Murray, 'is Sir John Graham. He has just left that new theatre of Southron perfidy.'

'I have hastened hither,' cried the knight, 'to call your victorious arm, to take a signal vengeance on the murderers of your grandfather. He, and eighteen other Scottish chiefs, have been treacherously put to death in the Barns of Ayr.'[1]

[1] The *Barns* of Ayr, were the barracks (or palace) built in that town by King Edward, for the occasional residence of his viceroy the Lord Warden.—(1809).

Wallace heard the chieftain to an end, without speaking or altering the stern attention of his countenance. But at the close, with an augmented suffusion of blood in his face, and his brows denouncing some tremendous fate, he rose:—'Sir John Graham,' said he, 'I attend you.'

'Whither?' demanded Murray.

'To Ayr,' answered Wallace; 'this moment I will set out for Dumbarton, to bring away the sinews of my strength. God will be our speed! and then this arm shall show how I loved that good old man.'

'I shall follow you in an hour,' exclaimed Murray. The seamen pushed off; then giving loose to their swelling sail; in less than ten minutes, the light vessel was wafted out of the little harbour; and turning a point—those in the castle saw it no more.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BARNS OF AYR

While the little bark bounded over the waves towards the mainland, the poor pilgrims of earth who were its freightage, with heavy hearts bent towards each other, intent on the further information they were to receive.

'Here is a list of the murdered chiefs: and of those who are in the dungeons, expecting the like treatment;' continued Graham, holding out a parchment; 'it was given to me by my faithful servant.' Wallace took it, but seeing his grandfather's name at the top, he could look no further: closing the scroll, 'Gallant Graham,' said he, 'I want no stimulus to urge me to the extirpation I meditate. If the sword of Heaven be with us, not one perpetrator of this horrid massacre, shall be alive to-morrow to repeat the deed.'

'What massacre?' Edwin ventured to inquire. Wallace put the parchment into his hand. Edwin opened the roll, and on seeing the words, 'A list of the Scottish Chiefs

murdered on the 18th of June, 1297, in the Judgment-Hall of the English Barons at Ayr,' his cheek, paled by the suspense of his mind, now reddened with the hue of indignation; but when the venerated name of his general's grandfather, met his sight, his horror-struck eye sought the face of Wallace: it was dark as before; and he was now in earnest discourse with Graham.

Forbearing to interrupt him, Edwin continued to read over the blood-registered names.[1] In turning the page, his eye glanced to the opposite side; and he saw at the head of 'A list of prisoners in the dungeons of Ayr,' the name of 'Lord Dundaff,' and immediately after it, that of 'Lord Ruthven!' He uttered a piercing cry; and extending his arms to Wallace, who turned round at so unusual a sound, the terror-struck boy exclaimed, 'My father is in their hands!—Oh! if you are indeed my brother, fly to Ayr, and save him!'

Wallace took up the open list which Edwin had dropped; he saw the name of Lord Ruthven amongst the prisoners; and folding his arms round this affectionate son, 'Compose yourself,' said he, 'it is to Ayr I am going: and if the God of justice be our speed, your father, and Lord Dundaff, shall not see another day in prison.'

Edwin threw himself on the neck of his friend: 'My benefactor!' was all he could utter. Wallace pressed him silently to his bosom.

'Who is this youth?' inquired Graham; 'to which of the noble companions of my captive father, is he son?'

'To William Ruthven,' answered Wallace; 'the valiant Lord of the Carse of Gowrie. And it is a noble scion from that glorious root. He it was, that enabled me to win Dumbarton. Look up, my brother!' cried Wallace, trying to regain so tender a mind, from the paralysing terrors which had seized it: 'Look up, and hear me recount the first fruits of your maiden arms, to our gallant friend.'

[1] Many of the first names in Scotland, fill the list which the poet Harrie gives of this horrid massacre.—(1809.)

As Wallace proceeded, the wonder of Graham was raised to a pitch, only to be equalled by his admiration; and taking the hand of Edwin, 'Receive me, brave youth,' said he, 'as your second brother; Sir William Wallace is your first; but, this night, we shall fight side by side for our fathers; and let that be our bond of kindred.'

Edwin pressed the young chief's cheek, with his innocent lips: 'Let us, together, free them;' cried he; 'and then we shall be born twins in happiness.'

'So be it,' cried Graham; 'and Sir William Wallace, be the sponsor of that hour!'

Wallace smiled on them; and turning his head towards the shore, when the vessel doubled a certain point, he saw the beach covered with armed men. To be sure they were his own, he drew his sword, and waved it in the air. At that moment a hundred falchions flashed in the sunbeams, and the shouts of 'Wallace!' came loudly on the breeze.

Graham and Edwin started on their feet; the seamen plied their oars; the boat dashed into the breakers—and Wallace, leaping on shore, was received with acclamations by his eager soldiers.

He no sooner landed, than he commenced his march. Murray joined him on the banks of the Irwin; and as Ayr was no very great distance from that river, at two hours before midnight the little army entered Laglane wood; where they halted, while Wallace, with his chieftains proceeded to reconnoitre the town. The wind swept in gusts through the trees, and seemed by its dismal yellings, to utter warnings of the dreadful retributions he was about to inflict. He had already declared his plan of destruction: and Graham, as a first measure, went to the spot he had fixed on with Macdougal, his servant, as a place of rendezvous. He returned with the man; who informed Wallace, that in honour of the sequestrated lands of the murdered chiefs having been that day partitioned by De Valence amongst certain Southron lords, a grand feast was going on in the governor's palace. Under the very roof where

they had shed the blood of the trusting Scots, they were now keeping this carousal!

'*Now*, then, is our time to strike!' cried Wallace: and ordering detachments of his men to take possession of the avenues to the town, he set forth with others, to reach the front of the castle gates, by a less frequented path than the main street. The darkness being so great that no object could be distinctly seen, they had not gone far, before Macdougal, who had undertaken to be their guide, discovered by the projection of a hill on the right, that he had lost the road.

'Our swords will find one!' exclaimed Kirkpatrick.

Unwilling to miss any advantage, in a situation where so much was at stake, Wallace gladly hailed a twinkling light, which gleamed from what he supposed the window of a distant cottage. Kirkpatrick, with Macdougal, offered to go forward, and explore what it might be. In a few minutes they arrived at a thatched building; from which, to their surprise, issued the wailing strains of the coronach.[1] Kirkpatrick paused. Its melancholy notes were sung by female voices. Hence, there being no danger in applying to such harmless inhabitants, to learn the way to the citadel, he proceeded to the door; when, intending to knock, the weight of his mailed arm burst open its slender latch, and discovered two poor women, in an inner apartment, wringing their hands over a shrouded corse. While the chief entered his friends came up. Murray and Graham, struck with sounds never breathed over the vulgar dead, lingered at the porch wondering what noble Scot could be the subject of lamentation in so lowly an abode. The stopping of these two chieftains impeded the steps of Wallace; who was pressing forward, without eye or ear for anything but the object of his march. Kirkpatrick at that moment appeared on the threshold, and without a word, putting forth his hand, seized the arm of

[1] *Coronach*, a national dirge sung over the body of a dead chief. —(1809.)

his commander, and pulled him into the cottage. Before Wallace could ask the reason of this, he saw a woman run forward with a light in her hand; the beams of which falling on the face of the knight of Ellerslie, with a shriek of joy she rushed towards him, and threw herself upon his neck.

He instantly recognised Elspa, his nurse; the faithful attendant on his grandfather's declining years; the happy matron who had decked the bridal bed of his Marion! and with an anguish of recollections that almost unmanned him, he returned her affectionate embrace.

'Here he lies!' cried the old woman, drawing him towards the rushy bier: and before he had time to demand, 'Who?' she pulled down the shroud, and disclosed the body of Sir Ronald Crawford. Wallace gazed on it, with a look of such dreadful import, that Edwin, whose anxious eyes then sought his countenance, trembled with a nameless horror. 'Oh,' thought he, 'to what is this noble soul reserved! Is he alone doomed to extirpate the enemies of Scotland, that every ill falls direct upon his head!'

'Sorry, sorry bier, for the good Lord Ronald!' cried the old woman. Wallace sighed heavily as he looked on the animated face of the aged mourner.

As her ardent eyes withdrew from their heavenward gaze, they fell upon the shrouded face of her master. A napkin concealed the wound of decapitation. 'Chiefs,' cried she, in a burst of recollection: 'ye have not seen all the cruelty of these murderers!' At these words she suddenly withdrew the linen, and lifting up the pale head, held it woefully towards Wallace: 'Here,' cried she, 'once more kiss these lips! They have often kissed yours, when you were a babe; and as insensible to his love, as he is now to your sorrow.'

Wallace received the head in his arms; the long silver beard, thick with gouts of blood, hung over his hands. He gazed on it, intently, for some minutes. An awful silence pervaded the room: every eye was riveted upon him.

Looking round on his friends, with a countenance, whose deadly hue gave a sepulchral fire to the gloomy denunciation of his eyes; 'Was it necessary,' said he, 'to turn my heart to iron, that I was brought to see this sight?' All the tremendous purpose of his soul was read in his face, while he laid the head back upon the bier. His lips again moved, but none heard what he said. He rushed from the hut; and, with rapid strides, proceeded in profound silence towards the palace.[1]

He well knew that no honest Scot could be under that roof. The building, though magnificent, was altogether a structure of wood; to fire it, then, was his determination. To destroy all, at once, in the theatre of their cruelty; to make an execution; not engage in a warfare of man to man was his resolution: for they were not soldiers he was seeking, but assassins: and to pitch his brave Scots in the open field, against such unmanly wretches, would be to dishonour his men; to give criminals a chance for the lives they had forfeited.

All being quiet in the few streets through which he passed, and having set strong bodies of men at the mouth of every sally-port of the citadel, he made a bold attack upon the guard at the barbican-gate; and, ere they could give the alarm, all being slain, he and his chosen troop entered the portal, and made direct to the palace. The lights which blazed through the windows of the banqueting-hall showed him to the spot: and, having detached Graham and Edwin to storm the keep, where their fathers were confined, he took the half-intoxicated sentinels at the palace-gates by surprise, and striking them into a sleep from which they would wake no more, he fastened the doors upon the assassins. His men surrounded the building with hurdles, filled with combustibles, which they had

[1] The parallel scene to this, in blind Harrie's poem, is yet more horribly described: its painting might have been too strong for a work of this kind; but the simple and pathetic lamentations of the nurse in the old poem, are not to be equalled by any copy in modern prose.—(1809.)

Wallace on the Roof at Ayr

prepared according to his directions; and, when all was ready, Wallace, with the mighty spirit of retribution nerving every limb, mounted to the roof, and tearing off the shingles; with a flaming brand in his hand, showed himself to the affrighted revellers beneath; and, as he threw it blazing amongst them, he cried aloud, 'The blood of the murdered, calls for vengeance, and it comes.'

At that instant, the matches were put to the faggots which surrounded the building; and the party within, springing from their seats, hastened towards the doors. All were fastened on them; and retreating into the midst of the room, they fearfully looked towards the tremendous figure above, which, like a supernatural being, seemed indeed come to rain fire upon their guilty heads. Some shook with superstitious dread; others, driven to atheistical despair, with horrible execrations, again strove to force a passage through the doors. A second glance, told De Valence whose was the hand which had launched the thunderbolt at his feet; and, turning to Sir Richard Arnulf, he cried, in a voice of horror, 'My arch-enemy is there!'

Thick smoke, rising from within and without the building, now obscured his terrific form. The shouts of the Scots, as the fire covered its walls, and the streaming flames, licking the windows, and pouring into every opening of the building, raised such a terror in the breasts of the wretches within, that, with the most horrible cries, they, again and again, flew to the doors to escape. Not an avenue appeared: almost suffocated with smoke, and scorched by the blazing rafters which fell from the burning roof, they at last made a desperate attempt to break a passage through the great portal. Arnulf was at their head; and sunk to abjectness by his despair, in a voice which terror rendered piercing, he called aloud for mercy. The words reached the ear of Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who stood nearest to the door. In a voice of thunder, he replied, 'That ye gave, ye shall receive. Where was mercy, when our fathers and our brothers fell beneath your murderous axes!'

Aymer de Valence came up at this moment, with a wooden pillar, which he, and the strongest men in the company, had torn from under the gallery that surrounded the room; and, with all their strength, dashing it against the great door, they at last drove it from its bolts. But now a wall of men opposed them. Desperate at the sight, and with a burning furnace in their rear, it was not the might of man that could prevent their escape; and with the determination of despair, rushing forward, the foremost rank of the Scots fell. But ere the exulting Southrons could press out into the open space, Wallace himself had closed upon them; and Arnulf, the merciless Arnulf, whose voice had pronounced the sentence of death upon Sir Ronald Crawford, died beneath his hand.

Wallace was not aware that he had killed the governor of Ayr, till the terror-struck exclamations of his enemies informed him, that the ruthless instigator of the massacre was slain. This event was welcome news to the Scots; and hoping that the next death would be that of De Valence, they pressed on with redoubled energy.

Dreadful was now the carnage; for the Southrons, forgetting all discipline, fought every man for his life; while the furious Scots, driving them into the far-spreading flames, what escaped the sword would have perished in the fire, had not the relenting heart of Wallace pleaded for bleeding humanity, and he ordered the trumpet to sound a parley. He was obeyed; and, standing on an adjacent mound, in an awful voice he proclaimed, that, 'whoever had not been accomplices in the horrible massacre of the Scottish chiefs, if they would ground their arms, and take an oath never to serve again against Scotland, their lives should be spared.'

Hundreds of swords fell to the ground; and their late holders, kneeling at his feet, took the oath prescribed. At the head of those who surrendered, appeared the captain who had commanded at the prison. He was the only officer of all the late garrison who survived: all else had

fallen in the conflict, or perished in the flames; and when he saw that not one of his late numerous companions existed, to go through the same humiliating ceremony, with an aghast countenance he said to Wallace, as he presented his sword, 'Then I must believe that with this weapon, I am surrendering to Sir William Wallace, the possession of this castle and the government of Ayr. I see not one of my late commanders—all must be slain; and for me to hold out longer, would be to sacrifice my men, not to redeem that which has been so completely wrested from us. But I serve severe exactors; and I hope that your testimony, my conqueror, will assure my king I fought as became his standard.'

Wallace gave him a gracious answer; and committing him to the generous care of Murray, he turned, to give orders to Ker respecting the surrendered, and the slain. During these momentous events, Graham had deemed it prudent that, exhausted by anxiety and privations, the noble captives should not come forth to join in the battle; and not until the sound of victory echoed through the arches of their dungeons, would he suffer the eager Dundaff to see and thank his deliverer. Meanwhile, the young Edwin appeared before the eyes of his father, like the angel who opened the prison-gates to Peter. After embracing him with all a son's fondness; in which for the moment he lost the repressing idea, that he might have offended by his truancy; after recounting, in a few hasty sentences, the events which had brought him to be a companion of Sir William Wallace; and to avenge the injuries of Scotland in Ayr, he knocked off the chains of his amazed father. Eager to perform the like service to all who had suffered in the like manner, and accompanied by the happy Lord Ruthven, (who gazed with delight on his son, treading so early the path of glory,) he hastened around to the other dungeons; and gladly proclaimed to the astonished inmates, freedom and safety. Having rid them of their shackles, he had just entered with his noble

company, into the vaulted chamber which contained the released Lord Dundaff, when the peaceful clarion sounded. At the joyful tidings, Graham started on his feet: 'Now, my father, you shall see the bravest of men!'

CHAPTER XX

BERWICK AND THE TWEED

After these dispositions, Wallace called a review of his troops; and found that he could leave five hundred men at Ayr, and march an army of at least two thousand out of it.

His present design was to take his course to Berwick; and, by seizing every castle of strength in his way, form a chain of works across the country; which would not only bulwark Scotland against any further inroads from its enemies, but render the subjugation of the interior Southron garrisons more certain and easy.

On the third morning after the conflagration of the palace, Wallace quitted Ayr; and marching over its far-stretching hills, manned every watch-tower on their summits. For now, whithersoever he moved, he found his victories had preceded him; and all, from hall to hovel, turned out to greet, and offer him their services. Thus, heralded by fame, the panic-struck Southron governors, fled at the distant view of his standards; the flames of Ayr, seemed to menace them all; and castle and fortalice, from Muir-kirk, to the walls of Berwick, opened their gates before him.

Arrived under those blood-stained towers, which had so often been the objects of dispute between the powers of England and of Scotland, he prepared for their immediate attack. Berwick, being a valuable fortress to the enemy, not only as a key to the invaded kingdom, but a point whence, by their ships, they commanded the whole of the eastern coast of Scotland; Wallace expected that a desperate stand would be made here to stop the progress of

his arms. But being aware that the most expeditious mode of warfare, was the best adapted to promote his cause, he first took the town by assault; and then, having driven the garrison into the citadel, assailed it by a vigorous siege.

After ten days' hard duty before the walls, Wallace devised a plan to obtain possession of the English ships which commanded the harbour. He found among his own troops many men who had been used to a seafaring life: these he disguised as fugitive Southrons from the late defeats, and sent in boats to the enemy's vessels which lay in the roads. The feint took; and by these means getting possession of those nearest to the town, he manned them with his own people; and going out with them himself, in three days made himself master of every ship on the coast.

By this manœuvre, the situation of the besieged was rendered so hopeless, that no mode of escape was left, but by desperate sallies. They made them; but without other effect, than weakening their strength, and increasing their miseries. Wallace was aware of all their resolutions; for knowing what would be best for them to do in their situation, he needed no better spy over their actions than his own judgment.

Foiled in every attempt, as their opponent, guessing their intentions, was prepared at every point to meet their different essays; and losing men at every rencontre, their governor stood without resource. Without provisions, without aid of any kind for his wounded men; and hourly annoyed by the victorious Scots, who continued, day and night, to throw showers of arrows, and other missile weapons, from the towers and springalls with which they had overtopped the walls; the unhappy Earl of Gloucester seemed ready to rush on death, to avoid the disgrace of surrendering the fortress. Every soul in the garrison was reduced to similar despair. Wallace even found means to dam up the spring which had supplied the citadel with

water. The common men, famished with hunger, smarting with wounds, and now perishing with unextinguishable thirst, threw themselves at the feet of their officers; imploring them to represent to their royal governor, that if he held out longer, he must defend the place alone; for they could not exist another day under their present sufferings.

As Wallace gave his orders, he observed the besieged passing in numbers behind a mound, in a direction to the tower where he stood: he concluded what was their design; and ordering a countermine to be made;—what he anticipated happened; and Murray, at the head of his miners, encountered those of the castle, at the very moment they would have set fire to the combustibles laid to consume the tower. The instant struggle, was violent, but short; for the impetuous Scots drove their amazed and enfeebled adversaries, through the aperture, back into the citadel. At this crisis, Wallace with a band of resolute men, sprang from the tower, upon the wall: and it being almost deserted by its late guards, (who had quitted their post, to assist in repelling the foe below), he leaped into the midst of the conflict; and the battle became general. It was decisive; for beholding the undaunted resolution, with which the weakened and dying were supporting the cause their governor was determined to defend to the last, Wallace found his admiration, and his pity, alike excited; and even while his followers seemed to have each his foe's life in his hands, when one instant more would make him the undisputed master of the castle, (for not a Southron would then breathe to dispute it,) he resolved to stop the carnage. At the moment when a gallant officer, who, having assaulted him with the vehemence of despair, now lay disarmed under him; at that moment, when the discomfited knight exclaimed, 'In mercy strike, and redeem the honour of Ralph de Monthermer!'[1] Wallace raised his

[1] Ralph de Monthermer, a noble knight, who married Jane of Acre, the daughter of King Edward I. He was created Earl of Gloucester on his marriage with that princess.—(1809.)

bugle, and sounded the note of peace. Every sword was arrested; and the universal clangour of battle was hushed in expecting silence.

'Rise, brave Earl,' cried Wallace, to the governor; 'I revere virtue, too sincerely, to take an unworthy advantage of my fortune. The valour of this garrison, commands my respect; and, as a proof of my sincerity, I grant to it, what I have never yet done to any: That yourself, and these dauntless men, march out with the honours of war; and without any bonds on your future conduct, towards us. We leave it to your own hearts, to decide, whether you will ever again be made instruments, to enchain a free and brave people.'

While he was speaking, De Monthermer leaned gloomily on the sword he had returned to him, with his eyes fixed on his men. They answered his glance, with looks that said, they understood him; and passing a few words in whispers to each other, one at last spoke aloud:—'Decide for us, Earl. We are as ready to die, as to live; so that in neither we may be divided from you.'

At this generous declaration, the proud despair of De Monthermer gave way to nobler feelings; and while a big tear stood in each eye, he turned to Wallace, and stretching out his hand to him: 'Noble Scot,' said he, 'your unexampled generosity, and the invincible fidelity of these heroic men, have compelled me to accept the life I had resolved to lose under these walls, rather than resign them. But virtue is resistless: and to it, do I surrender that pride of soul, which made existence insufferable under the consciousness of having erred. When I became the husband of King Edward's daughter, I believed myself pledged to victories, or to death. But there is a conquest, and I feel it, greater than over hosts in the field;—and here taught to make it, the husband of the Princess of England, the proud Earl of Gloucester, consents to live; to be a monument of Scottish nobleness, and of the inflexible fidelity of English soldiers.'

'You live, illustrious and virtuous Englishmen,' returned Wallace, 'to redeem that honour, of which too many rapacious sons of England have robbed their country. Go forth, therefore, as my conqueror; for you have in this spot, extinguished that burning antipathy, with which the outraged heart of William Wallace, had vowed to extirpate every Southron from off this ravaged land. Honour, brave Earl, makes all men brethren; and, as a brother, I open these gates for you, to repass into your country. When there, if you ever remember William Wallace, let it be as a man, who fights, not for conquest, nor renown; but to restore Scotland to her rights; and then resign his sword to peace.'

'I shall remember you, Sir William Wallace!' returned De Monthermer; 'and as a pledge of it, you shall never see me again in this country, till I come an ambassador of that peace for which you fight. But, meanwhile, in the moment of hot contention for the rights, which you believe wrested from you, do you remember that they have not been so much the spoil of my royal father's ambition, as the traffic of your own venal nobles. Had I not believed that Scotland was unworthy of freedom, I should never have appeared upon her borders; but now that I see she has brave hearts within her, who not only resist oppression, but know how to wield power, I detest the zeal with which I volunteered to rivet her chains. And I repeat, that never again shall my hostile foot impress this land.'

These sentiments were answered in the same spirit by his soldiers. And the Scots, following the example of their leader, treated them with every kindness. After dispensing amongst them provisions, and appointing means to convey the wounded in comfort, Wallace bade a cordial farewell to the Earl of Gloucester, and his men conducted their reconciled enemies over the Tweed. There they parted. The English bent their course towards London, and the Scots returned to their victorious general.

CHAPTER XXI

STIRLING

THE happy effects of these rapid conquests, were soon apparent. The fall of Berwick excited such a confidence in the minds of the neighbouring chieftains, that every hour brought fresh recruits to Wallace. Every mouth was full of the praises of the young conqueror; every eye was eager to catch a glimpse of his person; and while the men were emulous to share his glory, the women in their secret bowers put up prayers for the preservation of one so handsome, and so brave.

Amongst the many of every rank and age who hastened to pay their respects to the deliverer of Berwick, was Sir Richard Maitland of Thirlestane, the *Stalworth Knight of Lauderdale*.[1]

Wallace was no sooner told of the approach of the venerable chief, than he set forth to bid him welcome. At sight of the champion of Scotland, Sir Richard threw himself off his horse, with a military grace that might have become even youthful years; and hastening towards Wallace, clasped him in his arms.

'Let me look on thee!' cried the old knight; 'let me feast my eyes on the true Scot, who again raises this hoary head, so long bent in shame for its dishonoured country!' While he spoke he viewed Wallace from head to foot. 'I knew Sir Ronald Crawford, and thy valiant father,' continued he: 'O! had they lived to see this day! But the base murder of the one, thou hast nobly avenged; and the honourable grave of the other, on Loudon-hill,[2]

[1] Sir Richard Maitland, of the castle of Thirlestane on the Leader, is noted in Scottish tradition for his bravery. His valiant defence of his castle against the English in his extreme old age, is still the subject of enthusiasm amongst the people of Lauderdale.

[2] Sir Malcolm Wallace, the father of Sir William Wallace, was killed in the year 1295, on Loudon-hill, in a battle with the English.—(1809.)

thou wilt cover with a monument of thine own glories. Low are laid my own children, in this land of strife; but in thee I see a son of Scotland, that is to dry all our tears.'

He embraced Wallace again and again. And, as the veteran's overflowing heart rendered him garrulous, he expatiated on the energy with which the young victor had pursued his conquests; and paralleled them with the brilliant actions he had seen in his youth. While he thus discoursed, Wallace drew him towards the castle, and there presented to him the two nephews of the Earl of Mar.

To give the mourning father time to recover himself, Wallace was moving away, when he was met by Ker, bringing information that a youth had just arrived in breathless haste from Stirling, with a sealed packet, which he would not deliver into any hands but those of Sir William Wallace. Wallace requested his friends to show every attention to the Lord of Thirlestane, and then withdrew to meet the messenger.

On his entering the ante-room, the youth sprung forwards; but suddenly checking himself, he stood, as if irresolute whom to address.

'This is Sir William Wallace, young man,' said Ker; 'deliver your embassy.'

At these words, the youth pulled a packet from his bosom, and putting it into the chief's hand, retired in confusion. Wallace gave orders to Ker to take care of him; and then turned to inspect its contents. He wondered from whom it could come; aware of no Scot in Stirling who would dare to write to him while that town was possessed by the enemy. But not losing a moment in conjecture, he broke the seal.

How was he startled at the first words! and how was every energy of his heart roused to redoubled action, when he turned to the signature! The first words in the letter were these:—

'A daughter, trembling for the life of her father, presumes to address Sir William Wallace.' The signature was 'Helen Mar.' He began the letter again.

'A daughter, trembling for the life of her father, presumes to address Sir William Wallace. Alas! it will be a long letter! for it is to tell of our countless distresses. You have been his deliverer from the sword, from chains, and from the waves. Refuse not to save him again, to whom you have so often given life; and hasten, brave Wallace, to preserve the Earl of Mar from the scaffold.

'A cruel deception brought him from the isle of Bute; where you imagined you had left him in security. Lord Aymer de Valence, escaping a second time from your sword, fled, under covert of the night, from Ayr to Stirling. Cressingham, the rapacious robber of all our castles, found in him an apt coadjutor. They concerted how to avenge your late successes: and Cressingham, eager to enrich himself, while he flattered the resentments of his commander, suggested that you, Sir William Wallace, our deliverer, and our enemy's scourge, would most easily be made to feel through the bosoms of your friends. These cruel men have therefore determined by a mock trial, to condemn my father to death: and thus, while they distress you, put themselves in possession of his lands, with the semblance of justice.

'The substance of this most unrighteous debate, was communicated to me by De Valence himself; thinking to excuse his part in the affair, by proving to me, how insensible he is to the principles which move alike a patriot, and a man of honour.

'Having learnt from some too well-informed spy, that Lord Mar had retired in peaceful obscurity to Bute, these arch-enemies to our country, sent a body of men disguised as Scots, to Gourock. There they despatched a messenger into the island, to inform Lord Mar, that Sir William Wallace was on the banks of the frith, waiting to converse with him. My noble father, unsuspicious of

treachery, hurried to the summons. Lady Mar accompanied him; and so both fell into the snare.

'They were brought prisoners to Stirling; where another affliction awaited him:—he was to see his daughter, and his sister, in captivity.

'After I had been betrayed from St. Fillan's monastery by the falsehoods of one Scottish knight; and rescued from his power by the gallantry of another; I sought the protection of my aunt, Lady Ruthven, who then dwelt at Alloa on the banks of the Forth. Her husband had been invited to Ayr, by some treacherous requisition of the Governor Arnulf; and with many other lords was thrown into prison. Report says, bravest of men! that you have given freedom to my betrayed uncle.

'The moment Lord Ruthven's person was secured, his estates were seized; and my aunt and myself being found at Alloa, we were carried prisoners to this city. Alas! we had then no valiant arm to preserve us from our enemies!—Lady Ruthven's first-born son, was slain in the fatal day of Dunbar; and in terror of the like fate, she has placed her eldest surviving boy, in a convent.

'Some days after our arrival, my dear father was brought to Stirling. Though a captive in the town, I was not then confined to any closer durance than the walls. While he was yet passing through the streets, rumour told my aunt, that the Scottish lord then leading to prison, was her beloved brother. She flew to me, in an agony, to tell me the dreadful tidings. I heard no more, saw no more, till, having rushed into the streets, and bursting through every obstacle of crowd and soldiers, I found myself clasped in my father's arms—in his shackled arms!—What a moment was that!—Where was Sir William Wallace in that hour? Where the brave unknown knight, who had sworn to me, to seek my father, and defend him with his life?—Both were absent, and he was in chains.

'My grief and distraction baffled the attempts of the guards to part us; and what became of me, I know not,

till I found myself lying on a couch, attended by many women, and supported by my aunt. When I had recovered to lamentation, and to tears, my aunt told me, I was in the apartments of the Deputy Warden. He, with Cressingham, having gone out to meet the man they had so basely drawn into their toils, De Valence, himself, saw the struggles of paternal affection contending against the men who would have torn a senseless daughter from his arms; and yet, merciless man! he separated us; and sent me, with my aunt, a prisoner to his house.

'The next day, a packet was put into my aunt's hands, containing a few precious lines from my father to me; also a letter from the Countess to Lady Ruthven, full of your goodness to her, and to my father; and narrating the cruel manner in which they had been ravished from the asylum in which you had placed them. She then said, that could she find means of apprising you of the danger in which she and her husband are now involved, she would be sure of a second rescue. Whether she has blessedly found these means I know not; for all communication between us, since the delivery of that letter, has been rendered impracticable. The messenger that brought the packet, was a good Southron, who had been won by Lady Mar's entreaties. But on his quitting our apartments, he was seized by a servant of De Valence, and on the same day put publicly to death; to intimidate all others, from the like compassion to the sufferings of unhappy Scotland. Oh! Sir William Wallace, will not your sword reach these men of blood!

'Earl de Valence compelled my aunt to yield the packet to him. We had already read it, therefore did not regret it on that head, but feared the information it might give relative to you. In consequence of this circumstance, I was made a closer prisoner. But captivity could have no terrors for me, did it not divide me from my father. And, grief on grief! what words have I to write it? they have

CONDEMNED HIM TO DIE! That fatal letter of my stepmother's, was brought out against him; and as your adherent, Sir William Wallace, they have sentenced him to lose his head!

'I have knelt to Earl de Valence; I have implored my father's life at his hands; but to no purpose. He tells me, that Cressingham, at his side; and Ormsby, by letters from Scone; declare it necessary, that an execution of consequence should be made, to appall the discontented Scots; and that as no lord is more esteemed in Scotland than the Earl of Mar, *he must be the sacrifice!*

'Hasten then, my father's preserver, and friend! hasten to save him!—Oh, fly, for the sake of the country he loves: for the sake of the hapless beings dependent on his protection!—I shall be on my knees, till I hear your trumpet before the walls; for in you, and heaven, now rest all the hopes of Helen Mar.'

A cold dew stood on the limbs of Wallace, as he closed the letter. It might be too late! The sentence was passed on the Earl, and his executioners were prompt as cruel: the axe might already have fallen!

He called to Ker, for the messenger to be brought in. He entered. Wallace inquired, how long he had been from Stirling. 'Only thirty-four hours,' replied the youth; adding, that he had travelled night and day, for fear the news of the risings in Annandale, and the taking of Berwick, should precipitate the Earl's death.

'I accompany you this instant,' cried Wallace. 'Ker, see that the troops get under arms.' As he spoke, he turned into the room where he had left the knight of Thirlestane.

'Sir Richard Maitland,' said he, willing to avoid exciting his alarm, 'there is more work for us at Stirling. Lord Aymer de Valence has again escaped the death we thought had overtaken him, and is now in that citadel. I have just received a summons thither, which I must obey.' At these words, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick gave a shout and

rushed from the apartment. Wallace looked after him for a moment, and then continued: 'Follow us with your prayers, Sir Richard, and I shall not despair of sending blessed tidings to the banks of the Lauder.'

'What has happened?' inquired Murray, who saw that something more than the escape of De Valence had been imparted to his general.

'We must spare this good old man,' returned he, 'and have him conducted to his home before I declare it publicly; but the Earl of Mar is again a prisoner, and in Stirling.'

Murray, who instantly comprehended his uncle's danger, speeded the departure of Sir Richard; and, as Wallace held his stirrup, the chief laid his hand on his head and blessed him: 'The seer of Ercildown is too ill to bring his benediction himself, but I breathe it over this heroic brow!' Wallace bowed his head in silence; and the bridle being in the hand of Lord Andrew, he led the horse out of the eastern gate of the town, where, taking leave of the veteran knight, he soon rejoined his commander, whom he found in the midst of his chieftains.

He had informed them of the Earl of Mar's danger, and the policy, as well as justice, of rescuing so powerful and patriotic a nobleman from the threatened execution. Lord Ruthven needed no arguments to precipitate him to the assistance of his brother and his wife; and the anxieties of the affectionate Edwin were all awake when he knew that his mother was a prisoner. Lord Andrew smiled proudly when he returned his cousin's letter to Wallace: 'We shall have the rogue on the nail yet,' cried he; 'my uncle's brave head is not ordained to fall by the stroke of such a coward!'

'So I believe,' replied Wallace; and then turning to Lord Dundaff—'My Lord,' said he, 'I leave you governor of Berwick.'

The veteran warrior grasped Wallace's hand.—'To be your representative in this fortress, is the proudest station

this war-worn frame hath ever filled.—My son must be my representative with you in the field.' He waved Sir John Graham towards him: the young knight advanced, and Lord Dundaff, placing his son's hands upon his target, continued, 'Swear, that as this defends the body, you will ever strive to cover Scotland from her enemies; and that from this hour, you will be the faithful friend and follower of Sir William Wallace.'

'I swear,' returned Graham, kissing the shield.

At that moment some other captains coming up, Wallace made the proper military dispositions, and every man took his station at the head of his division.

Exordiums were not requisite to nerve every limb and to strengthen every heart in the toilsome journey. Mountains were climbed, vast plains traversed, rivers forded, and precipices crossed, without one man in the ranks lingering on his steps or dropping his head upon his pike to catch a moment's slumber. Those who had fought with Wallace longed to redouble their fame under his command; and they who had recently embraced his standard, panted with a virtuous ambition to rival those first-born in arms.

Sir Roger Kirkpatrick had been the first to fly to arms on the march to Stirling being mentioned; and when Wallace stood forward to declare that rest should be dispensed with till Stirling fell, full of a fierce joy the ardent knight darted over every obstacle to reach his aim. He flew to the van of his troops, and hailing them forward: 'Come on!' cried he, 'and in the blood of Cressingham let us for ever sink King Edward's Scottish crown.'

The shouts of the men, who seemed to drink in the spirit that blazed from Kirkpatrick's eyes, made the echoes of Lammermuir ring with a long-estranged noise. It was the voice of liberty. Leaping every bound, the eager van led the way, and, with prodigious perseverance, dragging their war-machines in the rear, the rest pressed on till they reached the Carron side. At the moment the foaming steed of Wallace, smoking with the labours of a

long and rapid march, was plunging into the stream to take the ford, Ker snatched the bridle of the horse:—'My Lord,' cried he, 'a man on full speed from Douglas castle has brought this packet.'

In his march from Ayr, Wallace had left Sir Eustace Maxwell governor of that castle, and Monteith as his lieutenant.

Wallace opened the packet, and read as follows:—

'The patriots in Annandale have been beaten by Lord de Warenne. Sir John Monteith (who volunteered to head them) is taken prisoner, with twelve hundred men.

'Earl de Warenne comes to resume his arrogant title of Lord Warden of Scotland, and thereby to relieve his deputy, Aymer de Valence, who is recalled to take possession of the lordship of Pembroke. In pursuance of his usurping commission, the Earl is now marching rapidly towards the Lothians in the hope of intercepting you in your progress.

'Thanks to the constant information you send us of your movements, for being enabled to apprise you of this danger! I should have attempted to have checked the Southron, by annoying his flanks, had not his numbers rendered such an enterprise on my part hopeless. But his aim being to come up with you, if you meet him in the van we shall have him in the rear, and, so surrounded, he must be cut to pieces. Surely the tree you planted in Dumbarton is not now to be blasted!—Ever my General's and Scotland's true servant,

'Eustace Maxwell.'

'What answer?' inquired Ker.

Wallace hastily engraved with his dagger's point, upon his gauntlet, 'Reviresco![1] Our sun is above!' and desiring it might be given to the messenger to carry to Sir Eustace Maxwell, he refixed himself in his saddle and spurred over the Carron.

[1]*Reviresco!* means *I bud again!* This encouraging word is now the motto of the Maxwell arms.—(1809.)

The moon was near her meridian as the wearied troops halted on the deep shadows of the Carse of Stirling. All around them was desolation; the sword and the fire had been there, not in open declared warfare, but under the darkness of midnight, and impelled by rapacity and wantonness; hence from the base of the rock, even to the foot of the Clackmannan hills, all lay a smoking wilderness.

An hour's rest was sufficient to restore every exhausted power to the limbs of the determined followers of Wallace. And, as the morning dawned, the sentinels on the ramparts of the town were not only surprised to see a host below, but that part (by the most indefatigable labour and a silence like death) had not merely passed the ditch, but having gained the counterscarp had fixed their moveable towers, and were at that instant overlooking the highest bastions. The mangonels and petraries, and other implements for battering walls, and the balista, with every efficient means of throwing missive weapons, were ready to discharge their artillery upon the heads of the besieged.

At a sight so unexpected, which seemed to have arisen out of the earth like an exhalation (with such muteness and expedition had the Scottish operations been carried on), the Southrons, struck with dread, fled a moment from the walls, but immediately recovering their presence of mind, they returned, and discharged a cloud of arrows upon their assailants. A messenger, meanwhile, was sent into the citadel to apprise De Valence and the Governor Cressingham of the assault. The interior gates now sent forth thousands to the walls, but in proportion to the numbers which approached, the greater was the harvest of death prepared for the terrible arm of Wallace, whose tremendous war-wolfs, throwing prodigious stones, and lighter springalls, casting forth brazen darts, swept away file after file of the reinforcements. It grieved the noble heart of the Scottish commander to see so many valiant men urged to inevitable destruction; but still they advanced, and that his own might be preserved, they must

fall. To shorten the bloody contest, his direful weapons were worked with redoubled energy; and so mortal a shower fell that the heavens seemed to rain iron. The crushed and stricken enemy, shrinking under the mighty tempest, forsook their ground.

The ramparts deserted, Wallace sprang from his tower upon the walls. At that moment De Valence opened one of the gates, and, at the head of a formidable body, charged the nearest Scots. A good soldier is never taken unawares, and Murray and Graham were prepared to receive him. Furiously driving him to a retrograde motion, they forced him back into the town. But there all was confusion; Wallace, with his resolute followers, had already put Cressingham and his legions to flight, and, closely pursued by Kirkpatrick they threw themselves into the castle.

The town was now in possession of the Scots. The gates were firmly closed, and the dismayed Cressingham was panting behind its walls, as Wallace commanded the parley to be sounded. Afraid of trusting himself within arrowshot of an enemy, who he believed conquered by witchcraft, the terrified governor sent his lieutenant upon the walls to answer the summons.

The herald of the Scots demanded the immediate surrender of the place. Cressingham was at that instant informed by a messenger, who had arrived too late the preceding night to be allowed to disturb his slumbers, that De Warenne was approaching with an immense army. Inflated with new confidence, he mounted the wall himself, and in haughty language returned for answer, 'That he would fall under the towers of the citadel, before he would surrender to a Scottish rebel. And as an example of the fate which such a delinquent merits,' continued he, 'I will change the milder sentence passed on Lord Mar, and immediately hang him and all his family on these ramparts, in sight of your insurgent army.'

'Then,' cried the herald, 'thus says Sir William Wallace—If even one hair on the heads of the Earl of Mar and

his family fall with violence to the ground, every Southron soul who has this day surrendered to the Scottish arms shall lose his head by the axe.'

'We are used to the blood of traitors,' cried Cressingham, 'and mind not its scent. But the army of Earl de Warenne is at hand: and it is at the peril of all your necks, for the rebel, your master, to put his threat in execution. Withdraw, or you shall see the dead bodies of Donald Mar and his family fringing these battlements; for no terms do we keep with man, woman, or child, who is linked with treason!'

At these words, an arrow winged from a hand behind Cressingham, flew directly to the unvisored face of Wallace: but it struck too high, and ringing against his helmet, fell to the ground.

'Treachery!' resounded from every Scottish lip; while, indignant at so villainous a rupture of the parley, every bow was drawn to the head; and a flight of arrows, armed with retribution, flew towards the battlements. All hands were now at work to bring the towers to the wall; and mounting on them, while the archers by their rapid showers drove the men from the ramparts, soldiers below, with pickaxes, dug into the wall to make a breach.

Cressingham began to fear that his boasted auxiliaries might arrive too late; but determining to gain time at least, he shot flights of darts, and large stones, from a thousand engines; also discharged burning combustibles over the ramparts, in hopes of setting fire to the enemy's attacking machines.

But all his promptitude proved of no effect. The walls were giving way in parts; and Wallace was mounting by scaling-ladders, and clasping the parapets with bridges from his towers. Driven to extremity, Cressingham resolved to try the attachment of the Scots for Lord Mar; and even at the moment when their chief had seized the barbican and outer ballium, this sanguinary politician ordered the imprisoned Earl to be brought out upon the

wall of the inner ballia. A rope was round his neck, which was instantly run through a groove, that projected from the nearest tower.

At this sight horror froze the ardent blood of Wallace. But the intrepid Earl, descrying his friend on the ladder which might soon carry him to the summit of the battlement, exclaimed, 'Forward! Let not my span of life stand between my country and this glorious day for Scotland's freedom!'

'Execute the sentence!' cried the infuriated Cressingham.

At these words, Murray and Edwin precipitated themselves upon the ramparts, and mowed down all before them, in a direction towards their uncle. The lieutenant who held the cord, aware of the impolicy of the cruel mandate, hesitated to fulfil it; and now fearing a rescue from the impetuous Scots, hurried his victim off the works, back to his prison. Meanwhile, Cressingham perceiving that all would be lost should he suffer the enemy to gain this wall also, sent such numbers upon the brave Scots, who had followed the cousins, that, overcoming some, and repelling others, they threw Murray, with a sudden shock, over the ramparts. Edwin was surrounded; and his successful adversaries were bearing him off, struggling and bleeding, when Wallace, springing like a lioness on hunters carrying away her young, rushed in singly amongst them. He seized Edwin; and while his falchion flashed terrible threatenings in their eyes, with a backward step he fought his passage to one of the wooden towers he had fastened to the wall.

Cressingham, being wounded in the head, commanded a parley to be sounded.

'We have already taken Lord de Valence and his host prisoners,' returned Wallace; 'and we grant you no cessation of hostilities till you deliver up the Earl of Mar and his family, and surrender the castle into our hands.'

'Think not, proud boaster!' cried the herald of Cressingham, 'that we ask a parley to conciliate. It was to tell

you, that if you do not draw off directly, not only the Earl of Mar and his family, but every Scottish prisoner within these walls, shall perish in your sight.'

While he yet spoke, the Southrons uttered a great shout, and the Scots looking up, beheld several high poles erected on the roof of the keep, and the Earl of Mar, as before, was led forward. But he seemed no longer the bold and tranquil patriot. He was surrounded by shrieking female forms, clinging to his knees; and his trembling hands were lifted to heaven, as if imploring its pity.

'Stop!' cried Wallace, in a voice whose thundering mandate rung from tower to tower. 'The instant he dies, Lord Aymer de Valence shall perish.'

He had only to make the sign, and in a few minutes that nobleman appeared between Ramsay and Kirkpatrick. 'Earl,' exclaimed Wallace, 'though I granted your life in the field with reluctance, yet here I am ashamed to put it in danger. But your own people compel me. Look on that spectacle! A venerable father, in the midst of his family; he, and they, doomed to an ignominious and instant death, unless I betray my country, and abandon these walls! Were I weak enough to purchase their lives at such an expense, they could not survive that disgrace. But that they shall not die, while I have power to preserve them, is my resolve and my duty!—Life, then, for life: yours for this family!'

Wallace, directing his voice towards the keep; 'The moment,' cried he, 'in which that vile cord presses too closely on the neck of the Earl of Mar, or any of his blood, the axe shall sever the head of Lord de Valence from his body.'

De Valence was now seen on the top of one of the besieging towers. He was pale as death. He trembled; but not with dismay only; ten thousand varying emotions tore his breast. To be thus set up as a monument of his own defeat; to be threatened with execution by an enemy he had contemned; to be exposed to such indignities by the

unthinking ferocity of his colleague; filled him with such contending passions of revenge against friends and foes, that he forgot the present fear of death in turbulent wishes to deprive of life all by whom he suffered.

Cressingham became alarmed on seeing the retaliating menace of Wallace brought so directly before his view: and dreading the vengeance of De Valence's powerful family, he ordered a herald to say that if Wallace would draw off his troops to the outer ballium, and the English chief along with them, the Lord Mar and his family should be taken from their perilous situation, and he would consider on terms of surrender.

Aware that Cressingham only wanted to gain time until De Warenne should arrive, Wallace determined to foil him with his own weapons, and make the gaining of the castle the consequence of vanquishing the Earl. He told the now perplexed governor that he should consider Lord de Valence as the hostage of safety for Lord Mar and his family; and therefore he consented to withdraw his men from the inner ballium till the setting of the sun; at which hour he should expect a herald, with the surrender of the fortress.

Thinking that he had caught the Scottish chief in a snare, and that the Lord Warden's army would be upon him long before the expiration of the armistice; Cressingham congratulated himself upon this manœuvre; and resolving that the moment Earl de Warenne should appear Lord Mar should be secretly destroyed in the dungeons, he ordered him to their security again.

Wallace fully comprehended what were his enemy's views; and what ought to be his own measures, as soon as he saw the unhappy group disappear from the battlements of the keep. He then recalled his men from the inner ballium wall; and stationing several detachments along the ramparts, and in the towers of the outer wall, committed De Valence to the stronghold of the barbican, under the especial charge of Lord Ruthven: who was

indeed eager to hold the means in his own hand, that were to check the threatened danger of relatives so dear to him, as were the prisoners in the castle.

CHAPTER XXII

CAMBUS-KENNETH

HAVING secured the advantages he had gained in the town and on the works of the castle, by manning all the strong places, Wallace set forward with his chosen troops to intercept De Warenne.

He took his position on a commanding ground, about half a mile from Stirling, near to the abbey of Cambus-Kenneth. The Forth lay before him, crossed by a wooden bridge; over which the enemy must pass to reach him, the river not being fordable in that part.

He ordered the timbers which supported the bridge to be sawed at the bottom, but not displaced in the least, that they might stand perfectly firm for as long as he should deem it necessary. To these timbers were fastened strong cords, all of which he intrusted to the sturdiest of his Lanark men; who were to lie concealed amongst the flags. These preparations being made, he drew up his troops in order of battle. Kirkpatrick and Murray commanded the flanks. In the centre stood Wallace himself, with Ramsay on one side of him, and Edwin, with Scrymgeour on the other; awaiting with steady expectation the approach of the enemy; who, by this time, could not be far distant.

Cressingham was not less well informed of the advance of De Warenne; and burning with revenge against Wallace, and earnest to redeem the favour of De Valence by some act in his behalf, he first gave secret orders to his lieutenant, then set forth alone; to seek an avenue of escape never divulged to any but to the commanders of the fortress. He soon discovered it; and by the light of a

torch, making his way through a passage bored in the rock, emerged at its western base, screened from sight by the surrounding bushes. He had disguised himself in a shepherd's bonnet and plaid, in case of being observed by the enemy; but fortune favoured him; and unseen he crept along through the thickets, till he descried the advance of De Warenne's army on the skirts of Tor wood.

Having missed Wallace in West Lothian, De Warenne divided his army into three divisions, to enter Stirlingshire by different routes, and so, he hoped, certainly to intercept him in one of them. The Earl of Montgomery led the first, of twenty thousand men; the Barons Hilton and Blenkinsopp the second, of ten thousand; and De Warenne himself the third, of thirty thousand.

It was the first of these divisions that Cressingham encountered in Tor wood; and, revealing himself to Montgomery, he recounted how rapidly Wallace had gained the town, and in what jeopardy the citadel would be if he were not instantly attacked. The Earl advised waiting for a junction with Hilton, or the Lord Warden; 'which,' said he, 'must happen in the course of a few hours.'

'In the course of a few hours,' returned Cressingham, 'you will have no Stirling castle to defend. The enemy will seize it at sunset, in pursuance of the very agreement by which I warded him off, to give us time to annihilate him before that hour. Therefore no hesitation; if we would not see him lock the gates of the north of Scotland upon us, even when we have the power to hurl him to perdition.'

By arguments such as these, the young Earl was induced to give up his judgment; and, accompanied by Cressingham, whose courage revived amid such a host, he proceeded to the southern bank of the Forth.

The bands of Wallace were drawn up on the opposite shore, hardly five thousand strong; but so disposed, the enemy could not calculate their numbers; though the narrowness of their front, suggested to Cressingham that they could not be numerous: and he recollected that many

must have been left to occupy the outworks of the town, and the citadel. 'It will be easy to surround the rebel,' cried he; 'and that we may effect our enterprise before the arrival of the Warden robs us of the honour, let us about it directly, and cross the bridge!'

Montgomery proposed a herald being sent, to inform Wallace, that besides the long line of troops he saw, De Warenne was advancing with double hosts; and if he would now surrender, a pardon should be granted to him and his, in the King's name, for all their late rebellions. Cressingham was vehement against this measure; but Montgomery being resolute, the messenger was despatched.

In a few minutes he returned, and repeated to the Southron commanders, the words of Wallace:—'Go,' said he, 'tell your masters we came not here to treat for a pardon, of what we shall never allow to be an offence: we came to assert our rights; to set Scotland free. Till that is effected, all negotiation is vain. Let them advance, they will find us prepared.'

'Then onward!' cried Montgomery; and spurring his steed, he led the way to the bridge; his eager soldiers followed; and the whole of his centre ranks passed over. The flanks advanced; and the bridge, from end to end, was filled with archers, cavalry, men-at-arms, and war-carriages. Cressingham, in the midst, was hallooing in proud triumph to those who occupied the rear of the straining beams, when the blast of a trumpet sounded from the till now silent and immovable Scottish phalanx. It was re-echoed by shouts, from behind the passing enemy—and in that moment, the supporting piers of the bridge were pulled away; and the whole of its mailed throng was precipitated into the stream.

The cries of the maimed, and the drowning, were joined by the terrific slogan of two bands of Scots. The one, with Wallace, towards the head of the river; while the other, under the command of Sir John Graham, rushed from its ambuscade on the opposite bank, upon the rear of the

dismayed troops; and both divisions sweeping all before them, drove those who fought on land into the river, and those who had just escaped the flood, to meet its waves again, a bleeding host.

In the midst of this conflict, which rather seemed a carnage than a battle, Kirkpatrick, having heard the proud shouts of Cressingham on the bridge, now sought him amidst its shattered timbers. With the ferocity of a tiger hunting his prey, he ran from man to man; and as the struggling wretches emerged from the water, he plucked them from the surge; but even while his glaring eyeballs, and uplifted axe, threatened destruction, he only looked on them; and with imprecations of disappointment, rushed forward on his chase. Almost in despair, that the waves had cheated his revenge, he was hurrying on in another direction, when he perceived a body moving through a hollow on his right. He turned, and saw the object of his search, crawling amongst the mud and sedges.

'Ha!' cried Kirkpatrick, with a triumphant yell, 'Art thou yet mine?—Damned, damned villain!' cried he, springing upon his breast: 'Behold the man you dishonoured!—behold the hot cheek your dastard hand defiled!—Thy blood shall obliterate the stain; and then Kirkpatrick may again front the proudest in Scotland!'

'For mercy!' cried the horror-struck Cressingham, struggling with preternatural strength to extricate himself.

'Hell would be my portion, did I grant any to thee,' cried Kirkpatrick; and with one stroke of his axe, he severed the head from its body. 'I am a man again!' shouted he, as he held its bleeding veins in his hand, and placed it on the point of his sword. 'Thou ruthless priest of Moloch, and of Mammon, thou shalt have thine own blood to drink, while I show my general how proudly I am avenged!' As he spoke, he dashed amongst the victorious ranks; and reached Wallace, at the very moment he was freeing himself from his fallen horse, which a random arrow had shot under him. Murray, at the

same instant, was bringing up the wounded Montgomery; who came to surrender his sword, and to beg quarter for his men. The Earl turned deadly pale; for the first object that struck his sight, was the fierce knight of Torthorald; walking under the stream of blood, which continued to flow from the ghastly head of Cressingham, as he held it exultingly in the air.

'If that be your chief,' cried Montgomery, 'I have mistaken him much—I cannot yield my sword to him.'

Murray understood him:—'If cruelty be an evil spirit,' returned he, 'it has fled every breast in this army, to shelter with Sir Roger Kirkpatrick; and its name is Legion! *That* is my chief!' added he, pointing to Wallace, with an evident consciousness of deriving honour from his command. The chief rose from the ground, dyed in the same ensanguined hue which had excited the abhorrence of Montgomery, though it had been drawn from his own veins, and those of his horse. All, indeed, of blood about him seemed to be on his garments; none was in his eyes, none in his heart, but what warmed it to mercy and to benevolence for all mankind. His eye momentarily fell on the approaching figure of Kirkpatrick; who, waving the head in the air, blew from his bugle the triumphal notes of the Pryse,[1] and then cried to his chief: 'I have slain the wolf of Scotland! My brave clansmen are now casing my target with his skin;[2] which, when I strike its bossy sides, will cry aloud, So perishes thy dishonour! So perish all the enemies of Scotland!'

'And with the extinction of that breath, Kirkpatrick,' cried Wallace, looking sternly from the head to him, 'let your fell revenge perish also. For your own honour, commit no indignities on the body you have slain.'

[1] The *Pryse* were the notes sounded in hunting at the death of the game.

[2] It is recorded that the memory of Cressingham was so odious to the Scots, they did indeed flay his dead body, and made saddles and girths and other things of his skin.—(1809.)

''Tis for you to conquer like a god!' cried Kirkpatrick: 'I have felt as a man, and like a man I revenge. This head shall destroy, even in death: it shall vanquish its friends for me; for I will wear it like a Gorgon on my sword, to turn to stone every Southron who looks on it.' While speaking, he disappeared amongst the thickening ranks; and as the victorious Scots hailed him in passing, Montgomery, thinking of his perishing men, suffered Murray to lead him to the scene of his humility.

The ever-comprehensive eye of Wallace perceived him as he advanced; and guessing by his armour and dignified demeanour, who he was; with a noble grade he raised his helmed bonnet from his head, when the Earl approached him. Montgomery looked on him; he felt his soul, even more than his arms, subdued; but still there was something about a soldier's heart, that shrunk from yielding his power of resistance. The blood mounted into his before pale cheeks: he held out his sword in silence to the victor; for he could not bring his tongue to pronounce the word 'surrender.'

Wallace understood the sign, and holding up his hand to a herald, the trumpet of peace was raised. It sounded: —and where, the moment before, were the horrid clash of arms, the yell of savage conquest, and direful cries for mercy, all was hushed as death. Not that death which has past, but that which is approaching.—None spoke; not a sound was heard, but the low groans of the dying, who lay, overwhelmed and perishing, beneath the bodies of the slain, and the feet of the living.

The voice of Wallace rose from this awful pause. Its sound was ever the harbinger of glory, or of 'good will to men.' 'Soldiers!' cried he, 'God has given victory—let us show our gratitude, by moderation and mercy. Gather the wounded into quarters, and bury the dead.'

Wallace then turned to the extended sword of the Earl: he put it gently back with his hand: 'Ever wear what you honour,' said he; 'but, gallant Montgomery, when

you draw it next, let it be in a better cause. Learn, brave Earl, to discriminate between a warrior's glory, and his shame; between the defender of his country, and the unprovoked ravager of other lands.'

Montgomery blushed scarlet at these words; but it was not with resentment. He looked down for a moment:—'Ah!' thought he, 'perhaps I ought never to have drawn it here!' Then raising his eyes to Wallace, he said—'Were you not the enemy of my king, who though a conqueror, sanctions none of the cruelties that have been committed in his name, I would give you my hand, before the remnant of his brave troops, whose lives you grant. But you have my heart; a heart that knows no difference between friend or foe, when the bonds of virtue would unite, what only civil dissensions hold separate.'

'Had your king possessed the virtues you believe he does,' replied Wallace, 'my sword might have now been a pruning-hook. But that is past! We are in arms for injuries received, and to drive out a tyrant. For believe me, noble Montgomery, that monarch has little pretensions to virtue, who suffers the oppressors of his people, or of his conquests, to go unpunished. To connive at cruelty, is to practise it. And has Edward ever frowned on one of those despots, who, in his name, have for these two years past, laid Scotland in blood and ashes?'

The appeal was too strong for Montgomery to answer: he felt its truth, and bowed, with an expression in his face, that told more, than as a subject of England, he dared declare.

The late expecting silence was turned into the clamorous activity of eager obedience. The prisoners were conducted to the rear of Stirling; while the major part of the Scots, (leaving a detachment, to unburden the earth of its bleeding load,) returned in front of the gates, just as De Warenne's division appeared on the horizon, like a moving cloud gilded by the now setting sun. At this

sight, Wallace sent Edwin into the town, with Lord Montgomery; and marshalling his line, prepared to bear down upon the approaching Earl.

But the Lord Warden had received information, which fought better for the Scots than a host of swords. When advanced a very little onward on the Carse of Stirling, one of his scouts brought intelligence, that having approached the south side of the Forth, he had seen that river floating with dead bodies; and soon after met Southron soldiers in full flight, while he heard from afar the Scottish horns blowing the notes of victory. From what he learnt from the fugitives, he also informed his lord, 'that not only the town and citadel of Stirling, were in the possession of Sir William Wallace, but the two detachments under Montgomery and Hilton had both been discomfited, and their leaders slain or taken.'

At this intelligence, Earl de Warenne stood aghast; and while he was still doubting that such disgrace to King Edward's arms could be possible, two or three fugitives came up, and witnessed to its truth. One, had seen Kirkpatrick, with the bloody head of the governor of Stirling on his sword. Another, had been near Cressingham in the wood, when he told Montgomery of the capture of De Valence; and concluding that he meant the leader of the third division, he corroborated the scout's information of the two defeats; adding (for terror magnified the objects of fear), that the Scots army was incalculable; but was so disposed by Sir William Wallace, as to appear inconsiderable, that he might ensnare his enemies, by filling them with hopes of an easy conquest.

These accounts persuaded De Warenne to make a retreat; and intimidated by the exaggerated representations of them who had fled, his men, with no little precipitation, turned to obey.

Wallace perceived the retrograde motion of his enemy's lines; and while a stream of arrows from his archers poured upon them like hail, he bore down upon the rear-guard

with his cavalry and men-at-arms, and sent Graham round by the wood, to surprise the flanks.

All was executed with promptitude; and the tremendous slogan sounding from side to side, the terrified Southrons, before in confusion, now threw away their arms, to lighten themselves for escape. Sensible that it is not the number of the dead, but the terror of the living, which gives the finishing stroke to conquest, De Warenne saw the effects of this panic, in the total disregard of his orders; and dreadful would have been the carnage of his troops, had he not sounded a parley.

The bugle of Wallace instantly answered it. De Warenne sent forward his herald. He offered to lay down his arms, provided he might be exempted from relinquishing the royal standard; and that he, and his men, might be permitted to return without delay into England.

Wallace accepted the first article; granted the second; but with regard to the third, it must be on condition, that he, the Lord de Warenne, and the officers taken in his army, or in other engagements lately fought in Scotland, should be immediately exchanged for the like number of noble Scots Wallace should name, who were prisoners in England; and that the common men of the army, now about to surrender their arms, should take an oath never to serve again against Scotland.

These preliminaries being agreed to, (their very boldness arguing the conscious advantage which seemed to compel the assent,) the Lord Warden advanced at the head of his thirty thousand troops; and first laying down his sword, which Wallace immediately returned to him; the officers and soldiers marched by with their heads uncovered, throwing down their weapons, as they approached their conqueror. Wallace extended his line, while the procession moved; for he had too much policy, to show his enemies, that thirty thousand men had yielded, almost without a blow, to scarce five thousand. The oath was afterwards administered to each regiment, by heralds,

sent for that purpose into the strath of Monteith; whither Wallace had directed the captured legions to assemble and refresh themselves, previous to their departure next morning for England. The privates thus disposed of, to release himself from the commanders also, Wallace told De Warenne, that duty called him away, but every respect would be paid to them by the Scottish officers.

He then gave directions to Sir Alexander Ramsay, to escort De Warenne, and the rest of the noble prisoners, to Stirling. Wallace himself, turned with his veteran band, to give a conqueror's greeting to the Baron of Hilton; and so ended the famous battles of Cambus-Kenneth, and the Carse of Stirling.

CHAPTER XXIII

STIRLING CASTLE

The prisoners which had been taken with Montgomery, were lodged behind the town, and the wounded carried into the abbey of Cambus-Kenneth; but when Edwin came to move that Earl himself, he found him too faint with loss of blood to sit a horse to Snawdoun. He therefore ordered a litter; and so conveyed his brave prisoner to that palace of the kings of Scotland in Stirling.

The priests in Wallace's army, not only exercised the Levitical, but the good Samaritan's functions; and they soon obeyed the young knight's summons to dress the wounds of Montgomery.

Messengers, meanwhile, arrived from Wallace, acquainting his chieftains in Stirling with the surrender of De Warenne's army. Hence no surprise was created in the breast of the wounded Earl, when he saw his commander enter the palace, as the prisoner of the illustrious Scot.

Montgomery held out his hand to the Lord Warden, in silence, and with a flushed cheek.

'Blush not, my noble friend!' cried De Warenne; 'these wounds speak more eloquently than a thousand tongues, the gallantry with which you maintained the sword that fate compelled you to surrender. But I, without a scratch, how can I meet the unconquered Edward? And yet it was not for myself, I feared; my brave and confiding soldiers were in all my thoughts; for I saw it was not to meet an army I led them, but against a whirlwind, a storm of war, with which no strength that I commanded could contend.'

While the English generals thus conversed, Edwin's impatient heart yearned to be again at the side of Wallace; and gladly resigning the charge of his noble prisoner, to Sir Alexander Ramsay; as soon as he observed a cessation in the conversation of the two earls, he drew near Montgomery, to take his leave.

'Farewell, till we meet again!' said the young Earl, pressing his hand: 'You have been a young brother, rather than an enemy to me.'

'Because,' returned Edwin, 'I follow the example of my general, who would willingly be the friend of all mankind.'

De Warenne looked at him with surprise: 'And who are you, who in that stripling form, utters gallant sentiments which might grace the maturest years?'

With a sweet dignity, Edwin replied, 'I am Edwin Ruthven, the adopted brother of Sir William Wallace.'

'And the son of him,' asked De Warenne, 'who, with Sir William Wallace, was the first to mount Dumbarton walls?'

At these words, the cheeks of Edwin were suffused with a more animated bloom. At the moment when his courage was distinguished on the heights of Dumbarton, by the vowed friendship of Wallace, he had found himself beloved by the bravest, and most amiable of beings; and in his light, he felt both warmth and brightness: but this question of De Warenne, conveyed to him that he had

found fame himself; that he was there publicly acknowledged, to be an object not unworthy of being called the brother of Sir William Wallace!—and, casting down his eyes, beaming with exultation, from the fixed gaze of De Warenne, he answered, 'I am that happy Ruthven, who had the honour to mount Dumbarton rock by the side of my general; and from his hand, there received the stroke of knighthood.'

De Warenne rose, much agitated: 'If such be the boys of Scotland, need we wonder, when the spirit of resistance is roused in the nation, that our strength should wither before its men?'

The brave youth, then telling Ramsay in what parts of the palace the rest of the lords were to be lodged, with recovered composure descended to the court-yard to take horse for Tor wood. He was galloping along under the bright light of the moon, when he heard a squadron on full speed approaching; and, presently Murray appeared at its head. 'Hurrah, Edwin!' cried he, 'well met! We come to demand the instant surrender of the citadel. Hilton's division has surrendered!'

The two barons had indeed come up about half an hour after Earl de Warenne's division was discomfited. Sir William Wallace had sent forward to the advancing enemy two heralds, bearing the colours of De Valence and Montgomery, with the captive banner of De Warenne, and requiring the present division to lay down its arms also. The sight of these standards was sufficient to assure Hilton there was no deceit in the embassy. The nature of his position precluded retreat; and not seeing any reason for ten thousand men disputing the day with a power to whom fifty thousand had just surrendered, he and his compeer, with the reluctance of veterans, embraced the terms of surrender.

The instant Hilton put his argent banner into the victor's hand, Wallace knew the castle must now be his; he had discomfited all who could have maintained it against

him. Impatient to apprise Lord Mar and his family of their safety, he despatched Murray with a considerable escort, to demand its surrender.

Murray gladly obeyed, and now accompanied by Edwin, with the standards of Cressingham, and De Warenne, trailing in the dust, he arrived before the castle, and summoned the lieutenant to the walls. But that officer, well aware of what was going to happen, feared to appear. From the battlements of the keep, he had seen the dreadful conflict on the banks of the Forth; he had seen the thousands of De Warenne, pass before the conqueror. To punish his treachery, in not only having suffered Cressingham to steal out, under the armistice, but upholding also the breaking of his word, to surrender at sunset! the terrified officer believed that Wallace was now come, to put the whole garrison to the sword.

At the first sight of Murray's approaching squadron, the lieutenant hurried to Lord Mar; to offer him immediate liberty, if he would go forth to Wallace, and treat with him to spare the lives of the garrison. Closed up in a solitary dungeon, the Earl knew nought of what was occurring without; and, when the Southron entered, he expected it was to lead him again to the death, which had been twice averted. But the pale and trembling lieutenant had no sooner spoken the first word, than Mar discerned it was a suppliant, not an executioner, he saw before him; and he was even promising that clemency from Wallace, which he knew dwelt in his heart, when Murray's trumpet sounded.

The lieutenant started, horror-struck. 'It is now too late! We have not made the first overture; and there sounds the death-bell of this garrison! I saved your life, Earl!' cried he, imploringly, to Lord Mar; 'when the enraged Cressingham commanded me to pull the cord which would have launched you into eternity,—I disobeyed him! For my sake, then, preserve this garrison, and accompany me to the ramparts.'

The chains were immediately knocked off the limbs of Mar, and the lieutenant presenting him with a sword, they appeared together on the battlements. As the declining moon shone on their backs, Murray did not discern that it was his uncle, who mounted the wall. But calling to him in a voice which declared there was no appeal, pointed to the humbled colours of Edward, and demanded the instant surrender of the citadel.

'Let it be then with the pledge of Sir William Wallace's mercy?' cried the venerable Earl.

'With every pledge, Lord Mar,' returned Murray, now joyfully recognising his uncle, 'which you think safe to give.'

'Then the keys of the citadel are yours,' cried the lieutenant: 'I only ask the lives of my garrison.'

This was granted; and immediate preparations were made for the admission of the Scots. As the enraptured Edwin heard the heavy chains of the portcullis drawing up, and the massy bolts of the huge doors grating in their guards, he thought of his mother's liberty, of his father's joy, in pressing her again in his arms; and hastening to the tower where Lord Ruthven held watch over the now sleeping De Valence, he told him all that had happened: 'Go, my father,' added he; 'enter with Murray, and be the first to open the prison doors of my mother.'

Lord Ruthven embraced his son. 'My dear Edwin! this sacrifice to my feelings is worthy of you. But I have a duty to perform, superior even to the tenderest private ones. I am planted here by my commander; and shall I quit my station, for any gratification, till he gives me leave? No, my son!—be you my representative to your mother: and while my example teaches you, above all earthly considerations to obey your honour, those tender embraces will show her, what I sacrifice to duty.'

Edwin no longer urged his father; and leaving his apartment, flew to the gate of the inner ballium. It was

open: and Murray already stood on the platform before the keep, receiving the keys of the garrison.

'Blessed sight!' cried the Earl, to his nephew; 'When I put the banner of Mar into your unpractised hand, little could I expect, that in the course of four months, I should see my brave Andrew receive the keys of proud Stirling from its commander!'

Murray smiled, while his plumed head bowed gratefully to his uncle; and turning to the lieutenant, 'Now,' said he, 'lead me to the ladies Mar and Ruthven; that I may assure them, they are free.'

The gates of the keep were now unclosed; and the lieutenant conducted his victors along a gloomy passage, to a low door, studded with knobs of iron. As he drew the bolt; he whispered to Lord Mar, 'These severities are the hard policy of Governor Cressingham.'

He pushed the door slowly open, and discovered a small miserable cell; its walls of rugged stone having no other covering than the incrustations, which time, and many a dripping winter, had strewn over their vaulted surface. On the ground, on a pallet of straw, lay a female figure in a profound sleep. But the light which the lieutenant held, streaming full upon the uncurtained slumberer, she started, and, with a shriek of terror, at sight of so many armed men, discovered the pallid features of the Countess of Mar. With an anguish, which hardly the freedom he was going to bestow, could ameliorate, the Earl rushed forward, and throwing himself beside her, caught her in his arms.

'Are we then to die?' cried she, in a voice of horror: 'Has Wallace abandoned us?—Are we to perish?—Heartless, heartless man!'

Overcome by his emotions, the Earl could only strain her to his breast, in speechless agitation. Edwin saw a picture of his mother's sufferings in the present distraction of the Countess; and he felt his powers of utterance locked up; but Lord Andrew, whose ever-light heart was gay the moment he was no longer unhappy, jocosely

answered, 'My fair aunt, there are many hearts to die by your eyes, before that day! and, meanwhile, I come from Sir William Wallace—to set you free!'

The name of Wallace, and the intimation, that *he had sent to set her free*, drove every former thought of death, and misery, from her mind: again the ambrosial gales of love, seemed to breathe around her—she saw not her prison walls; she felt herself again in his presence: and in a blissful trance, rather endured, than participated, the warm congratulations of her husband on their mutual safety.

Edwin, and Murray, turned to follow the lieutenant; who, preceding them, stopped at the end of the gallery, 'Here,' said he, 'is Lady Ruthven's habitation; and—alas! not better than the Countess's.' While he spoke, he threw open the door, and discovered its sad inmate also asleep. But when the glad voice of her son pierced her ear; when his fond embraces clung to her bosom, her surprise, and emotions, were almost insupportable. Hardly crediting her senses, that he whom she had believed was safe in the cloisters of St. Columba, could be within the dangerous walls of Stirling; that it was his mailed breast, that pressed against her bosom; that it was his voice she heard exclaiming, 'Mother, we come to give you freedom!' all appeared to her like a dream of madness.

She listened, she felt him, she found her cheek wet with his rapturous tears:—'Am I in my right mind?' cried she, looking at him, with a fearful, yet overjoyed countenance: 'Am I not mad? O! tell me,' cried she, turning to Murray, and the lieutenant, 'is this my son that I see, or has terror turned my brain?'

'It is indeed your son, your Edwin, my very self,' returned he, alarmed at the expression of her voice and countenance. Murray gently advanced, and kneeling down by her, respectfully took her hand. 'He speaks truth, my dear madam. It is your son Edwin. He left his convent, to be a volunteer with Sir William Wallace.

He has covered himself with honour, on the walls of Dumbarton; and here also, a sharer in his leader's victories, he is come to set you free.'

At this explanation, which being given in the sober language of reason, Lady Ruthven believed, she gave way to the full happiness of her soul, and falling on the neck of her son, embraced him with a flood of tears:—'And thy father, Edwin, where is he? Did not the noble Wallace rescue him from Ayr?'

'He did, and he is here.' Edwin then repeated to his mother, the affectionate message of his father, and the particulars of his release. Perceiving how happily they were engaged, Murray, now with a flutter in his own bosom, rose from his knees, and requested the lieutenant to conduct him to Lady Helen Mar.

His guide led the way by a winding staircase, into a stone gallery; where letting Lord Andrew into a spacious apartment, divided in the midst by a vast screen of carved cedar-wood, he pointed to a curtained entrance:—'In that chamber,' said he, 'lodges the Lady Helen.'

'Ah, my poor cousin!' exclaimed Murray, 'though she seems not to have tasted the hardships of her parents, she has shared their misery I do not doubt.' While he spoke, the lieutenant bowed in silence, and Murray entered alone. The chamber was magnificent, and illumined by a lamp which hung from the ceiling. He cautiously approached the bed, fearing too hastily to disturb her, and gently pulling aside the curtain, beheld vacancy. An exclamation of alarm had almost escaped him, when observing a half-open door at the other side of the apartment, he drew towards it; and there beheld his cousin, with her back to him, kneeling before a crucifix. She spoke not, but the fervour of her action manifested how earnestly she prayed. He moved behind her, but she heard him not; her whole soul was absorbed in the success of her petition; and at last raising her clasped hands in a paroxysm of emotion, she exclaimed,—'If that trumpet sounded the

victory of the Scots, then, Power of Goodness! receive Thy servant's thanks. But if De Warenne have conquered, where De Valence failed; if all whom I love be lost to me here, take me then to Thyself; and let my freed spirit fly to their embraces in heaven!'

'Ay, and on earth, too, thou blessed angel!' cried Murray, throwing himself towards her She started from her knees; and with such a cry as the widow of Sarepta uttered when she embraced her son from the dead, Helen threw herself on the bosom of her cousin, and closed her eyes in a blissful swoon—for even while every outward sense seemed fled, the impression of joy played about her heart; and the animated throbbings of Murray's breast, while he pressed her in his arms, at last aroused her to recollection. Her glistening and uplifted eyes told all the happiness, all the gratitude of her soul. 'My father?—All are safe?' demanded she. 'All, my best beloved!' answered Murray, forgetting, in the powerful emotions of his heart, that what he felt, and what he uttered, were beyond even a cousin's limits:—'My uncle; the Countess; Lord and Lady Ruthven; all are safe.'

'And Sir William Wallace?' cried she: 'you do not mention him. I hope no ill—'

'He is conqueror here!' interrupted Murray. 'He has subdued every obstacle between Berwick and Stirling; and he has sent me hither to set you and the rest of the dear prisoners free.'

Helen's heart throbbed witn a new tumult as he spoke. She longed to ask whether the unknown knight from whom she had parted in the hermit's cell had ever joined Sir William Wallace? She yearned to know that he yet lived. At the thought of the probability of his having fallen in some of these desperate conflicts, her soul seemed to gasp for existence; and dropping her head on her cousin's shoulder: 'Tell me, Andrew—' said she, and there she paused, with an emotion for which she could not account to herself.

'Of what would my sweet cousin inquire?' asked Murray, partaking her agitation.

'Nothing particular,' said she, covered with blushes; 'but did you fight alone in these battles? Did no other knight but Sir William Wallace?'

'Many, dearest Helen,' returned Murray, enraptured at a solicitude which he appropriated to himself. 'Many knights joined our arms. All fought in a manner worthy of their leader; and thanks to Heaven, none have fallen.'

'Thanks, indeed!' cried Helen; and with a hope, she dared hardly whisper to herself, of seeing the unknown knight in the gallant train of the conqueror, she falteringly said, 'Now, Andrew, lead me to my father.'

Murray would perhaps have required a second bidding, had not Lord Mar, impatient to see his daughter, appeared with the Countess at the door of the apartment. Hastening towards them, she fell on the bosom of her father; and while she bathed his face and hands with her glad tears, he too wept, and mingled blessings with his caresses. No coldness here met his paternal heart; no distracting confusions tore her from his arms: no averted looks, by turns, alarmed and chilled the bosom of tenderness. All was innocence and duty in Helen's breast; and every ingenuous action showed its affection and its joy. The estranged heart of Lady Mar had closed against him; and though he suspected not its wanderings, he felt the unutterable difference between the warm transports of his daughter, and the frigid gratulations, forced from the lips of his wife.

Lady Mar gazed with a weird frown on the lovely form of Helen, as she wound her exquisitely turned arms around the Earl in filial tenderness. Her bosom, heaving in the snowy whiteness of virgin purity; her face, radiant with the softest blooms of youth; all seemed to frame an object which malignant fiends had conjured up to blast her stepdame's hopes. 'Wallace will behold these charms!' cried her distracted spirit to herself, 'and then, where am I?'

While her thoughts thus followed each other, she unconsciously darted looks on Helen, which, if an evil eye had any witching power, would have withered all her beauties. At one of these portentous moments, the glad eyes of Helen met her glance: she started with horror. It made her remember how she had been betrayed, and all that she had suffered from Soulis. But she could not forget that she had also been rescued; and with that blessed recollection, the image of her preserver rose before her. At this gentle idea her alarmed countenance took a softer expression; and, tenderly sighing, she turned to her father's question of 'How she came to be with Lady Ruthven, when he had been taught by Lord Andrew to believe her safe at St. Fillan's?'

'Yes,' cried Murray, throwing himself on a seat beside her, 'I found in your letter to Sir William Wallace, that you had been betrayed from your asylum by some traitor Scot; and but for the fulness of my joy at our present meeting, I should have inquired the name of the villain?'

Lady Mar felt a deadly sickness at her heart on hearing that Sir William Wallace was already so far acquainted with her daughter as to have received a letter from her; and in amazed despair she prepared to listen to what she expected would bring a death-stroke to her hopes. They had met—but how?—where? They wrote to each other! Then, far indeed had proceeded that communication of hearts, which was now the aim of her life—and she was undone! Helen glanced at the face of Lady Mar, and observing its changes, regarded them as corroborations of her having been the betrayer. 'If conscience disturbs you thus,' thought Helen, 'let it rend your heart, and perhaps remorse may follow!'

As the tide of success seemed so full for the patriot Scots, Helen no longer feared that her cousin would rashly seek a precarious vengeance on the traitor Soulis, when he might probably soon have an opportunity of making

it certain, at the head of an army. She therefore commenced her narrative, from the time of Murray's leaving her at the priory; and continued it to the hour in which she had met her father, a prisoner in the streets of Stirling. As she proceeded, the indignation of the Earl, and of Murray against Soulis, became vehement. The nephew was full of immediate personal revenge. But the father, with arguments similar to those which had suggested themselves to his daughter, calmed the lover's rage; for Murray now felt that fire, as well as a kinsman's; and reseated himself with repressed, though burning resentment, to listen to the remainder of her relation.

The quaking conscience of Lady Mar did indeed vary her cheeks with a thousand dyes, when, as Helen repeated part of her conversation with Macgregor's wife, Murray abruptly said, 'Surely that woman could name the traitor who betrayed us into the hands of our enemies! Did she not hint it?'

Helen cast down her eyes, that even a glance might not overwhelm with insupportable shame the already trembling Countess. Lady Mar saw that she was acquainted with her guilt; and expecting no more mercy than she knew she would show to Helen in the like circumstances, she hastily rose from her chair; internally vowing vengeance against her triumphant daughter, and hatred of all mankind. But Helen thought she might have so erred, from a wife's alarm for the safety of the husband she professed to dote on; and this dutiful daughter determined never to accuse her.

While all the furies raged in the breast of the guilty woman, Helen simply answered, 'Lord Soulis would be weak as he is vile, to trust a secret of that kind with a servant;' then hurried on to the relation of subsequent events. The Countess breathed again; and, almost deceiving herself with the idea that Helen was indeed ignorant of her treachery, listened with emotions of another kind, when she heard of the rescue of her daughter-in-law. She

saw Wallace in that brave act! But as Helen, undesignedly to herself, passed over the parts in their conversation which had most interested her, and never named the graces of his person, Lady Mar thought, that to have viewed Wallace with so little notice, would have been impossible; and therefore was glad of such a double conviction, that he and her daughter had never met; which seemed verified, when Helen said, that the unknown chief had promised to join his arms with those of Wallace.

CHAPTER XXIV

STIRLING CITADEL

At noon next day, Murray received a message from Wallace, desiring him to acquaint the Earl of Mar that he was coming to the citadel, to offer the palace of Snawdoun to the ladies of Mar; and to request the Earl, to take charge of the illustrious prisoners he was bringing to the castle.

Each member of the family hastened to prepare for an interview, which excited different expectations in each different breast. Lady Mar, well satisfied that Helen and Wallace had never met; and clinging to the vague words of Murray, that he had sent to give *her* liberty; called forth every art of the tyring-room, to embellish her still fine person. Lady Ruthven, with the respectable eagerness of a chaste matron, in prospect of seeing the man who had so often been the preserver of her brother, and who had so lately delivered her husband from a loathesome dungeon, was the first who joined the Earl in the great gallery. Lady Mar soon after entered like Juno, in all her plumage of majesty and beauty.

But the trumpet of Wallace had sounded in the gates, before the trembling Helen could leave her apartment. It was the herald of his approach; and she sunk breathless into a seat. She was now going to see for the first time

the man whose woes she had so often wept; the man who had incurred them all, for objects dear to her. He whom she had mourned, as one stricken in sorrows; and feared for, as an outlaw doomed to suffering and to death; was now to appear before her, not in the garb of woe, which excuses the sympathy its wearer excites, but arrayed as a conqueror; as the champion of Scotland, giving laws to her oppressors; and entering in triumph, over fields of their slain!

Awful as this picture was, to the timidity of her gentle nature, it alone did not occasion that inexpressible sensation, which seemed to check the pulses of her heart. Was she, or was she not, to recognise in his train, the young and noble Bruce? Was she to be assured, that he still existed? Or, by seeking him everywhere in vain, be ascertained that he, who could not break his word, had perished, lonely, and unknown?

While these ideas thronged into her mind, the platform below was filling with the triumphant Scots; and, her door suddenly opening, Edwin entered in delighted haste:—'Come, cousin!' cried he; 'Sir William Wallace has almost finished his business in the great hall. He has made my uncle governor of this place, and has committed nearly a thousand prisoners of rank to his care. If you be not expeditious, you will allow him to enter the gallery before you.'

Hardly observing her face, from the happy emotions which dazzled his own eyes, he seized her hand, and hurried her to the gallery.

Only her aunt and step-mother were yet there. Lady Ruthven sat composedly, on a tapestried bench, awaiting the arrival of the company. But Lady Mar was near the door, listening impatiently to the voices beneath. At sight of Helen, she drew back; but she smiled exultingly, when she saw, that all the splendour of beauty she had so lately beheld and dreaded was flown. Her unadorned garments gave no particular attraction to the simple

lines of her form: the effulgence of her complexion was gone; her cheek was pale; and the tremulous motion of her step, deprived her of the elastic grace which was usually the charm of her nymph-like figure.

Triumph now sat in the eyes of the Countess; and, with an air of authority, she waved Helen to take a seat beside Lady Ruthven. But Helen, fearful of what might be her emotion when the train should enter, had just placed herself behind her aunt, when the steps of many a mailed foot sounded upon the oaken floor of the outward gallery. The next moment the great doors of the huge screen opened, and a crowd of knights in armour, flashed upon her eyes. A strange dimness overspread her faculties, and nothing appeared to her, but an indistinct throng approaching. She would have given worlds to have been removed from the spot, but was unable to stir; and on recovering her senses, she beheld Lady Mar, (who, exclaiming, 'Ever my preserver!' had hastened forward,) now leaning on the bosom of one of the chiefs:—his head was bent, as if answering her in a low voice. By the golden locks, which hung down upon the jewelled tresses of the Countess, and obscured his face, she judged it must indeed be the deliverer of her father, the knight of her dream. But where was he, who had delivered herself, from a worse fate than death? Where was the dweller of her daily thoughts, the bright apparition of her unslumbering pillow?

Helen's sight, now clearing to as keen a vision as before it had been dulled and indistinct, with a timid and anxious gaze glanced from face to face of the chieftains around; but all were strange. Then withdrawing her eyes with a sad conviction that their search was indeed in vain; in the very moment of that despair, they were arrested by a glimpse of the features of Wallace. He had raised his head; he shook back his clustering hair, and her secret was revealed. In that god-like countenance, she recognised the object of her devoted wishes! and with a

gasp of overwhelming surprise, she must have fallen from her seat, had not Lady Ruthven, hearing a sound like the sigh of death, turned round, and caught her in her arms. The cry of her aunt, drew every eye to the spot. Wallace immediately relinquished the Countess to her husband, and moved towards the beautiful and senseless form that lay on the bosom of Lady Ruthven. The Earl and his agitated wife followed.

'What ails my Helen?' asked the affectionate father.

'I know not,' replied his sister; 'she sat behind me, and I knew nothing of her disorder, till she fell as you see.'

Murray instantly supposed that she had discovered the unknown knight, and looking from countenance to countenance, amongst the train, to try if he could discern the envied cause of such emotions; he read in no face an answering feeling with that of Helen's; and turning away from his unavailing scrutiny, on hearing her draw a deep sigh, his eyes fixed themselves on her, as if they would have read her soul. Wallace, who, in the pale form before him, saw, not only the woman, whom he had preserved with a brother's care; but the compassionate saint, who had given a hallowed grave to the remains of an angel, pure as herself; now hung over her with an anxiety so eloquent in every feature, that the Countess would willingly at that moment have stabbed her in every vein.

Lady Ruthven had sprinkled her niece with water; and as she began to revive, Wallace motioned to his chieftains to withdraw. Her eyes opened slowly; but recollection returning with every reawakened sense, she dimly perceived a press of people around her, and fearful of again encountering that face, which declared the Bruce of her secret meditations, and the Wallace of her declared veneration, were one; she buried her blushes in the bosom of her father. In that short point of time, images of past, present, and to come, rushed before her; and without confessing to herself, why she thought it necessary to make the vow, her soul seemed to swear on the sacred altar of

a parent's heart, never more to think on either idea. Separate, it was sweet to muse on her own deliverer; it was delightful to dwell on the virtues of her father's preserver. But when she saw both characters blended in one, her feelings seemed sacrilege; and she wished even to bury her gratitude, where no eye but Heaven's could see its depth and fervour.

Trembling at what might be the consequences of this scene, Lady Mar determined to hint to Wallace, that Helen loved some unknown knight; and bending to her daughter, said in a low voice, yet loud enough for him to hear, 'Retire, my child; you will be better in your own room, whether pleasure or disappointment about the person you wished to discover in Sir William's train, have occasioned these emotions.'

Helen recovered herself at this indelicate remark; and raising her head, with that modest dignity which only belongs to the purest mind, gently but firmly said, 'I obey you, madam; and he whom I have seen, will be too generous, not to pardon the effects of so unexpected a weight of gratitude.' As she spoke, her turning eye met the fixed gaze of Wallace. His countenance became agitated: and dropping on his knee beside her: 'Gracious lady,' cried he, 'mine is the weight of gratitude; but it is dear and precious to me; a debt that my life will not be able to repay. I was ignorant of all your goodness, when we parted in the hermit's cave. But the spirit of an angel like yourself, Lady Helen, will whisper to you, all her widowed husband's thanks.' He pressed her hand fervently between his, and rising, left the room.

Helen looked on him with an immovable eye, in which the heroic vow of her soul spoke in every beam; but as he arose, even then she felt its frailty; for her spirit seemed leaving her; and as he disappeared from the door, her world seemed shut from her eyes. Not to think of him was impossible: how to think of him was in her own power. Her heart felt as if suddenly made a desert. But

heroism was there. She had looked upon the Heaven-dedicated Wallace; on the widowed mourner of Marion; the saint and the hero; the being of another world! and as such, she would regard him; till in the realms of purity, she might acknowledge the brother of her soul.

A sacred inspiration seemed to illuminate her features; and to brace with the vigour of immortality, those limbs which before had sunk under her. She forgot she was still of earth, while a holy love like that of the dove in Paradise, sat brooding on her heart.

Lady Mar gazed on her, without understanding the ethereal meaning of those looks. Judging from her own impassioned feelings, she could only resolve the resplendent beauty, which shone from the now animated face and form of Helen, into the rapture of finding herself beloved. Had she not heard Wallace declare himself to be the unknown knight who had rescued Helen? she had heard him devote his life to her: and was not his heart included in that dedication? She had then heard that love vowed to another, which she would have sacrificed her soul to win!

Murray too was confounded; but his reflections were far different from those of Lady Mar. He saw his newly self-discerned passion, smothered in its first breath. At the moment in which he found that he loved his cousin above all of woman's mould, an unappealable voice in his bosom bade him crush every fond desire. That heart, which, with the chaste transports of a sister, had throbbed so entrancingly against his, was then another's! was become the captive of Wallace's virtues; of the only man, who, his judgment would have said, deserves Helen Mar!—But when he clasped her glowing beauties in his arms only the night before, his enraptured soul then believed that the tender smile he saw on her lips, was meant as the sweet earnest of the happier moment, when he might hold her there for ever! That dream was now past.—'Well! be it so!' said he to himself; 'if this too daring passion must be

clipt on the wing, I have at least the consolation, that it soared like the bird of Jove!—But, loveliest of created beings,' thought he, looking on Helen with an expression which, had she met it, would have told her all that was passing in his soul; 'if I am not to be thy love; I will be thy friend—and live for thee and Wallace!'

Believing that she had read her sentence, in what she thought the triumphant glances of a happy passion; Lady Mar turned from her daughter-in-law, with such a hatred kindling in her heart, she durst not trust her eyes to the inspection of the bystanders. But her tongue could not be restrained, beyond the moment in which the object of her jealousy left the room. As the door closed upon Helen, who retired leaning on the arms of her aunt and Edwin; the Countess turned to her lord; his eyes were looking with doting fondness towards the point where she withdrew. This sight augmented the angry tumults in the breast of his wife; and with a bitter smile, she said, 'So, my Lord, you find the icy bosom of your Helen can be thawed!'

'How do you mean, Joanna?' returned the Earl, doubting her words and looks; 'you surely cannot blame our daughter, for being sensible of gratitude.'

'I blame all young women,' replied she, 'who give themselves airs of unnatural coldness; and then, when the proof comes, behave in a manner so extraordinary, so indelicately, I must say.'

'My Lady Mar!' ejaculated the Earl, with an amazed look; 'what am I to think of you, from this! How has my daughter behaved indelicately? She did not lay her head on Sir William Wallace's bosom and weep there, till he replaced her on her natural pillow, mine. Have a care, madam, that I do not see more in this spleen, than would be honourable to you, for me to discover.'

Fearing nothing so much, as that her husband should really suspect the passion which possessed her; and so remove her from the side of Wallace; she presently recalled

her former duplicity, and with a surprised, and uncomprehending air, replied, 'I do not understand what you mean, Donald.' Then turning to Lord Ruthven, who stood uneasily viewing this scene, 'How,' cried she, 'can my Lord discover spleen, in my maternal anxiety respecting the daughter of the husband I love and honour above all the earth? But men do not properly estimate female reserve. Any woman would say with me, that to faint at the sight of Sir William Wallace, was declaring an emotion not to be revealed before so large a company! a something, from which men might not draw the most agreeable inferences.'

'It only declared surprise, madam,' cried Murray, 'the surprise of a modest and ingenuous mind that did not expect to recognise its mountain friend, in the person of the protector of Scotland.'

Lady Mar put up her lip, and turning to the still silent Lord Ruthven, again addressed him. 'Stepmothers, my Lord,' said she, 'have hard duties to perform; and when we think we fulfil them best, our suspicious husband comes with a magician's wand, and turns all our good to evil.'

'Array your good in a less equivocal garb, my dear Joanna,' answered the Earl of Mar, rather ashamed of the hasty words which indeed the suspicion of a moment had drawn from his lips; 'judge my child, by her usual conduct; not by an accidental appearance of inconsistency; and I shall ever be grateful for your solicitude. But in this instance, though she might betray the weakness of an enfeebled constitution, it was certainly not the frailty of a love-sick heart.'

'Judge me by your own rule, dear Donald,' cried his wife, blandishingly kissing his forehead; 'and you will not again wither the mother of your boy, with such a look as I just now received!'

Glad to see this reconciliation, Lord Ruthven made a sign to Murray, and they withdrew together.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CARSE OF STIRLING

The fame of these victories, the seizure of Stirling, the conquest of above sixty thousand men, and the Lord Warden with his late deputy taken prisoners; all spread through the country, on the wings of the wind.

Messengers were despatched by Wallace, not only to the nobles who had already declared for the cause, by sending him their armed followers; but to the clans, who yet stood irresolute. To the chiefs who had taken the side of Edward, he sent no exhortation. And when Lord Ruthven advised him to do so, 'No, my Lord,' said he; 'we must not spread a snare under our feet. If these men could be affected by the interest of their country, and as they had the power to befriend her, they would not have colleagued with her enemies. They remember her happiness, under the rule of our Alexanders; they see her sufferings, beneath the sway of an usurper; and if they can know these things, and require arguments to bring them to their duty; should they then come to it, it would not be to fulfil, but to betray. Ours, my dear Lord Ruthven, is a commission from Heaven. The truth of our cause, is God's own signet; and is so clear, that it need only to be seen, to be acknowledged. All honest minds will come to us of themselves; and those who are not so, had better be avoided, than shown the way by which treachery may effect, what open violence cannot accomplish.'

This reasoning, drawn from the experience of nature, neither encumbered by the subtleties of policy, nor the sophistry of the schools, was evident to every honest understanding, and decided the question.

Lady Mar, unknown to any one, again applied to her fatal pen; but with other views than for the ruin of the cause, or the destruction of Wallace. It was to strengthen his hands, with the power of all her kinsmen; and finally,

by the crown which they should place on his head, exalt her to the dignity of a queen. She wrote first to John Cummin, Earl of Buchan; enforcing a thousand reasons why he should now leave a sinking cause, and join the rising fortunes of his country.

'You see,' said she, 'that the happy star of Edward is setting. The King of France, not only maintains possession of that monarch's territory of Guienne, but he holds him in check on the shores of Flanders. Baffled abroad, an insurrection awaits him at home; the priesthood whom he has robbed, cover his name with anathemas: the nobles, whom he has insulted, trample on his prerogatives; and the people, whose privileges he has invaded, call aloud for redress. The proud barons of England, are ready to revolt; and the Lords Hereford, and Norfolk, (those two earls whom, after madly threatening to hang,[1] he sought to bribe to their allegiance, by leaving them in the full powers of constable and mareschal of England;) they are now conducting themselves with such domineering consequence, that even the Prince of Wales submits to their directions; and the throne of the absent tyrant is shaken to its centre.

'Sir William Wallace has rescued Scotland from his yoke. The country now calls for her ancient lords—those who made her kings, and supported them. Come, then, my cousin! espouse the cause of right; the cause that is in power; the cause that may aggrandise the house of Cummin, with still higher dignities, than any with which it has hitherto been blazoned.'

With these arguments, and with others more adapted to his Belial mind, she tried to bring him to her purpose;

[1] Edward intended to send out forces to Guienne, under the command of Humphrey Earl of Hereford the constable, and Roger Earl of Norfolk the marshal, of England, when these two powerful nobles refused to execute his commands. A violent altercation ensued; and the King, in the height of his passion, exclaimed to the constable, 'Sir Earl, by G—, you shall either go or hang.' 'By G—, Sir King,' replied Hereford, 'I will neither go nor hang.' And he immediately departed with the marshal and their respective trains.

to awaken what ambition he possessed; and to entice his baser passions, by offering security in a rescued county, to the indulgence of senses to which he had already sacrificed the best properties of man. She despatched her letter by a messenger, whom she bribed to secrecy; and added in her postscript, that 'the answer she should hope to receive, would be an offer of his services to Sir William Wallace.'

While the Countess of Mar was devising her plans (for the gaining of Lord Buchan was only a preliminary measure), the despatches of Wallace had taken effect. Their simple details, and the voice of fame, had roused a general spirit throughout the land; and in the course of a very short time after the different messengers had left Stirling, the plain around the city was covered with a mixed multitude. All Scotland seemed pressing to throw itself at the feet of its preserver. A large body of men brought from Mar by Murray, according to his uncle's orders, were amongst the first encamped on the Carse; and that part of Wallace's own particular band, which he had left at Dumbarton, to recover of their wounds, now, under the command of Stephen Ireland, rejoined their lord at Stirling.

Neil Campbell, the brave Lord of Loch-awe, and Lord Bothwell, the father of Lord Andrew Murray, with a strong reinforcement, arrived from Argyleshire. The chiefs of Ross, Dundas, Gordon, Lockhart, Logan, Elphinstone, Scott, Erskine, Lindsay, Cameron, and of almost every noble family in Scotland, sent their sons at the head of detachments from their clans, to swell the victorious ranks of Sir William Wallace.

When this patriotic host assembled on the Carse of Stirling, every inmate of the city, who had not duty to confine him within the walls, turned out to view the glorious sight. Mounted on a rising ground, they saw each little army; and the emblazoned banners of all the chivalry of Scotland, floating afar over the lengthened ranks.

At this moment, the lines which guarded the outworks of Stirling opened from right to left, and discovered Wallace advancing on a white charger. When the conqueror of Edward's hosts appeared—the deliverer of Scotland,—a mighty shout, from the thousands around, rent the skies, and shook the earth on which they stood.

Wallace raised his helmet from his brow, as by an instinctive motion every hand bent the sword, or banner it contained.

'He comes in the strength of David!' cried the venerable Bishop of Dunkeld, who appeared at the head of his church's tenantry: 'Scots, behold the Lord's anointed!'

The exclamation, which burst like inspiration from the lips of the Bishop, struck to every heart. 'Long live our *William the Lion!* our *Scottish King!*' was echoed with transport by every follower on the ground; and while the reverberating heavens seemed to ratify the voice of the people, the lords themselves (believing that he who won, had the best right to enjoy,) joined in the glorious cry. Galloping up from the front of their ranks, they threw themselves from their steeds; and before Wallace could recover from the surprise into which this unexpected salutation had thrown him, Lord Bothwell and Lord Loch-awe, followed by the rest, had bent their knees, and acknowledged him to be their sovereign. The Bishop of Dunkeld, at the same moment drawing from his breast a silver dove of sacred oil, poured it upon the unbonneted head of Wallace: 'Thus, O King!' cried he, 'do I consecrate on earth, what has already received the unction of Heaven!'

Wallace, at this action, was awe-struck, and raising his eyes to that Heaven, his soul in silence breathed its unutterable devotion. Then looking on the Bishop: 'Holy father,' said he, 'this unction may have prepared my brows for a crown; but, it is not of this world, and Divine Mercy must bestow it. Rise, lords!' and as he spoke, he

flung himself off his horse, and taking Lord Bothwell by the hand as the eldest of the band, 'Kneel not to me,' cried he; 'I am to you what Gideon was to the Israelites,—your fellow-soldier. I cannot assume the sceptre you would bestow; for He who rules us all, has yet preserved to you a lawful monarch. Bruce lives. And were he extinct, the blood-royal flows in too many noble veins in Scotland, for me to usurp its rights.'

'The rights of the crown, lie with the only man in Scotland who knows how to defend them! else reason is blind, or the nation abandons its own prerogative. What we have this moment vowed, is not to be forsworn. Baliol has abdicated our throne; the Bruce deserts it; all our nobles slept till you awoke: and shall we bow to men who may follow, but will not lead? No, bravest Wallace; from the moment you drew the first sword for Scotland, you made yourself her lawful king!'

Wallace turned to the veteran Lord of Loch-awe, who uttered this with a blunt determination that meant to say, the election which had passed, should not be recalled. 'I made myself her champion: to fight for her freedom, not my own aggrandisement. Were I to accept the honour with which this too grateful nation would repay my service, I should not bring it that peace for which I contend. Struggling for liberty, the toils of my brave countrymen would be redoubled; for they would have to maintain the rights of an unallied king, against an host of enemies. The circumstance, of a man from the private stations of life being elevated to such dignity, would be felt as an insult by every royal house; and foes and friends would arm against us. On these grounds of policy alone, even were my heart not loyal to the vows of my ancestors, I should repel the mischief you would bring upon yourselves by making me your king. As it is; my conscience, as well as my judgment, compels me to reject it. As your general, I may serve you gloriously; as your monarch, in spite of myself, I should incur your ultimate destruction.'

'From whom, noblest of Scots?' asked the Lord of Bothwell.

'From yourselves, my friends,' answered Wallace, with a gentle smile. 'Could I take advantage of the generous enthusiasm of a grateful nation; could I forget the duty I owe to the blood of our Alexanders, and leap into the throne; there are many who would soon revolt against their own election. You cannot be ignorant, that there are natures who would endure no rule, did it not come by the right of inheritance: a right by which they hold their own preeminence: and therefore will not dispute, lest they teach their inferiors the same refractory lesson. But to bend with voluntary subjection, to long obey a power raised by themselves, would be a sacrifice abhorrent to their pride. After having displayed their efficiency in making a king, they would prove their independence, by striving to pull him down, the moment he made them feel his sceptre.

'Such would be the fate of this election. Jealousies, and rebellions, would mark my reign; till even my closest adherents, seeing the miseries of civil war, would fall from my side, and leave the country again open to the inroads of her enemies.

'These, my friends and countrymen, would be my reasons for rejecting the crown, did my ambition point that way. But as I have no joy in titles, no pleasure in any power that does not spring hourly from the heart; let my reign be in your bosoms; and with the appellation of your fellow-soldier, your friend! I will fight for you, I will conquer for you—I will live or die!'

'This man,' whispered Lord Buchan, who having arrived in the rear of the troops on the appearance of Wallace, advanced within hearing of what he said; 'this man shows more cunning in repulsing a crown, than most are capable of exerting to obtain one.'

'Ay, but let us see,' returned the Earl of March, who accompanied him, 'whether it be not Cæsar's coyness;

he thrice refused the purple, and yet he died Emperor of the Romans!'

'He that offers me a crown,' returned Buchan, 'shall never catch me playing the coquet with its charms. I warrant you, I would embrace the lovely mischief, in the first presentation.' A shout rent the air. 'What is that?' cried he, interrupting himself.

'He has followed your advice,' answered March, with a satirical smile; 'it is the preliminary trumpet to, Long live King William the Great!'

Lord Buchan spurred forward to Scrymgeour, whom he knew, and inquired 'where the new king was to be crowned? We have not yet to thank him for the possession of Scone!'

'True,' cried Sir Alexander, comprehending the sarcasm; 'but did Sir William Wallace accept the prayers of Scotland, neither Scone nor any other spot in the kingdom, should refuse the place of his coronation.'

'Not accept them!' replied Buchan; 'then why that shout? Do the changelings rejoice in being refused?'

'When we cannot gain the altitude of our desires,' returned the knight, 'it is yet subject for thankfulness, when we reach a step towards it. Sir William Wallace has consented to be considered as the Protector of the kingdom; to hold it for the rightful sovereign, under the name of Regent.'

'Ay,' cried March, 'he has only taken a mistress instead of a wife: and trust me, when once he has got her into his arms, it will not be all the greybeards in Scotland, that can wrest her thence again. I marvel to see how men can be cajoled, and call the vizard virtue.'

Scrymgeour had not waited for this reply of the insolent Earl; and Buchan answered him; 'I care not,' said he; 'whoever keeps my castle over my head, and my cellars full, is welcome to reign over John of Buchan. So onward, my gallant Cospatrick, to make our bow to royalty in masquerade.'

When these scorners approached, they found Wallace standing uncovered in the midst of his happy nobles. There was not a man present, to whom he had not given proofs of his divine commission: each individual was snatched from a state of oppression, and disgrace, and placed in security and honour. With overflowing gratitude, they all thronged around him; and the young, the isolated Wallace, found a nation waiting on his nod; the hearts of half a million of people offered to his hand, to turn and wind them as he pleased. No crown sat on his brows: but the bright halo of true glory beamed from his godlike countenance. It even checked the arrogant smiles with which the haughty March, and the voluptuous Buchan, came forward to mock him with their homage.

As the near relations of Lady Mar, he received them with courtesy; but one glance of his eye penetrated to the hollowness of both; and then remounting his steed, the stirrups of which were held by Edwin and Ker, he touched the head of the former with his hand: 'Follow me, my friend; I now go to pay my duty to your mother. —For you, my lords,' said he, turning to the nobles around, 'I shall hope to meet you at noon in the citadel; where we must consult together on further prompt movements. Nothing with us can be considered as won, till all is gained.'

The chieftains, with bows, acquiesced in his mandate, and fell back towards their troops. But the foremost ranks of those brave fellows, having heard much of what had passed, were so inflamed with admiration of their Regent, that they rushed forward; and collecting in crowds around his horse, and in his path, some pressed to kiss his hand, and others his garments, while the rest ran in his way, shouting and calling down blessings upon him, till he stopped at the gate of Snawdoun.[1]

[1] This scene between Wallace and his chiefs, has lately been pointed out to the author as the part most likely to have incurred the censure and interdiction of the Emperor Napoleon.—(1840.)

CHAPTER XXVI

STIRLING CASTLE AND COUNCIL HALL

Owing to the multiplicity of affairs which engaged Wallace's attention after the capture of Stirling, the ladies of Mar had not seen him since his first visit to the citadel. The Countess passed this time in writing her despatches to the numerous lords of her house, both in Scotland and in England; and by her subtle arguments she completely persuaded her husband, of the cogency of putting the names of Lord Athol, and Lord Badenoch, into the list of noble prisoners he should request.

When this was proposed to Wallace, he recollected the conduct of Athol at Montrose; and being alone with Lord Mar, he made some objections against inviting him back into the country. But the Earl, who was prepared by his wife to overcome every obstacle in the way of her kinsman's return, answered, 'That he believed, from the representations he had received of the private opinions both of Badenoch and Athol, that their treason was more against Baliol, than the kingdom; and that now that prince was irretrievably removed, he understood they would be glad to take a part in its recovery.'

'That may be the case with the Earl of Badenoch,' replied Wallace, 'but something less friendly to Scotland, must be in the breast of the man who could betray Lord Douglas into the hands of his enemies.'

'So I should have thought,' replied the Earl, 'had not the earnestness with which my wife pleads his cause, convinced me she knows more of his mind than she chooses to intrust me with; and therefore I suppose his conduct to Douglas arose from personal pique.'

Though these explanations did not at all raise the absent lords in his esteem, yet to appear hostile to the return of Lady Mar's relations would be a violence to her, which in proportion as Wallace shrunk from the

guilty affection she was so eager to lavish upon him, he was averse to committing; wishing, by showing her every proper consideration, to lead her to apprehend the turpitude of her conduct; by convincing her that his abhorrence of her advances, had its origin in principle, rather than from personal repugnance to herself; and so she might see the foulness of her crime, and be recalled to virtue. He was therefore not displeased to have this opportunity of obliging her; and as he hoped that amongst so many warm friends, a few cool ones could not do much injury, he gave in the names of Badenoch and Athol; with those of Lord Douglas, Sir William Maitland (the only son of the venerable knight of Thirlestane), Sir John Monteith, and many other brave Scots.

For these, the Earls De Warenne, De Valence, and Montgomery, the Barons Hilton and Blenkinsopp, and others of note, were to be exchanged. Those of lesser consequence, man for man, were to be returned for Scots of the same degree.

In arranging preliminaries to effect the speedy return of the Scots from England (who must be known to have arrived on the borders, before the English would be permitted to recross them); in writing despatches on this subject, and on others of equal moment; had passed the time between the surrender of Stirling, and the hour when Wallace was called to the plain, to receive the offered homage of his grateful country.

Impatient to behold again the object of her fond machinations, Lady Mar hastened to the window of her apartment, when the shouts in the streets informed her of the approach of Wallace. The loud huzzas, accompanied by the acclamations of 'Our Protector and Prince!' seemed already to bind her brows with her anticipated diadem; and for a moment, vanity lost the image of love, in the purple with which she enveloped it.

Her ambitious vision was disturbed by the crowd rushing forward: the gates were thronged with people of

every age and sex; and Wallace himself appeared, on his white charger, with his helmet off, bowing and smiling upon the populace. There was a mild effulgence in his eye; a divine benevolence in his countenance, as his parted lips showed the brightness of his smile; which seemed to speak of happiness within, of joy to all around. She hastily snatched a chaplet of flowers from her head, and threw it from the window. Wallace looked up; his bow, and his smile, were then directed to her! but they were altered. The moment he met the gratulation of her eager eyes, he remembered what would have been the soft welcome of his Marion's, under the like circumstance! But that tender eye was closed; that ear was shut; to whom he would have wished these plaudits to have given rapture,—and they were now as nothing to him. The Countess saw not what was passing in his mind, but kissing her hand to him, disappeared from the window when he entered the palace.

Another eye besides Lady Mar's, had witnessed the triumphant entry of Wallace. Triumphant in the true sense of the word; for he came a victor over the hearts of men; he came, not attended by his captives won in the war, but by the people he had blessed; by throngs calling him preserver, father, friend, and prince! By every title which can inspire the soul of man with the happy consciousness of fulfilling his embassy here below.

Helen was this witness. She had passed the long interval, since she had seen Wallace, in the state of one in a dream. The glance had been so transient, that every succeeding hour seemed to lessen the evidence of her senses, that she had really beheld him. It appeared impossible to her, that the man whom her thoughts had hitherto dwelt on as the widowed husband of Marion, as the hero whom sorrow had wholly dedicated to patriotism and to Heaven, should ever awaken in her breast, feelings which would seem to break like a sacrilegious host, upon the holy consecration of his. Once, she had contemplated his idea with the pensive impressions of one leaning over

the grave of a hero: and she could then turn, as if emerging from the glooms of sepulchral monuments to upper day, to the image of her unknown knight! she could then, blamelessly recollect the matchless graces of his figure; the noble soul that breathed from his every word and action; the sweet, though thoughtful, serenity that sat on his brow! 'There,' whispered she to herself, 'are the lofty meditations of a royal mind, devising the freedom of his people. When that is effected, how will the perfect sunshine break out from that face! Ah! how blest must Scotland be under his reign, when all will be light, virtue, and joy!' Bliss hovered like an angel, over the image of this imaginary Bruce; while sorrow, in mourning weeds, seemed ever dropping tears, when any circumstance recalled that of the real Wallace.

The Countess's chivalric tribute from the window, gave Wallace reason to anticipate her company in his visit to Lady Ruthven; and on finding the room vacant, he despatched Edwin for his mother; that he might not be distressed by the unchecked advances of a woman whom, as the wife of Lord Mar, he was obliged to see, and whose weakness he pitied, as she belonged to a sex for which, in consideration of the felicity once bestowed on him by woman, he felt a peculiar tenderness. Respect the Countess he could not; nor, indeed, could he feel any gratitude for a preference which seemed to him to have no foundations in the only true basis of love—the virtues of the object. For as she acted against every moral law, against his declared sentiments, it was evident that she placed little value on his esteem; and therefore he despised, while he pitied, a human creature ungovernably yielding herself to the sway of her passions.

In the midst of thoughts so little to her advantage, Lady Mar entered the room. Wallace turned to meet her; while she, hastening towards him, and dropping on one knee, exclaimed, 'Let me be the first woman in Scotland to acknowledge its king!'

Wallace put forth both his hands to raise her; and, smiling, replied, 'Lady Mar, you would do me an honour I can never claim.'

'How?' cried she, starting up. 'What then, was that cry I heard? Did they not call you "prince," and "sovereign"? Did not my Lord Buchan——'

Confused, disappointed, overpowered, she left the sentence unfinished, sunk on a seat, and burst into tears. At that moment, she saw her anticipated crown fall from her head; and having united the gaining of Wallace, with his acquisition of this dignity, all her hopes seemed again the sport of winds. She felt as if Wallace had eluded her power; for it was by the ambition-serving acts of her kinsman, that she had meant to bind him to her love; and now all was rejected, and she wept in despair. He gazed at her with amazement. What these emotions, and his elevation, had to do with each other, he could not guess; but, recollecting her manner of mentioning Lord Buchan's name, he answered, 'Lord Buchan I have just seen. He and Lord March came upon the Carse, at the time I went thither to meet my gallant countrymen; and these two noblemen, though so lately the friends of Edward, united with the rest in proclaiming me Regent.'

This word dried the tears of Lady Mar. She saw the shadow of royalty behind it; and summoning artifice, to conceal the joy of her heart, she calmly said, 'Do not too severely condemn this weakness: it is not that of vain wishes for your aggrandisement. You are the same to Joanna Mar, whether as a monarch or a private man, so long as you possess that supremacy in all excellence, which first gained her esteem. It is for Scotland's sake alone, that I wish you to be her king. You have taught me to forget all selfish desires—to respect myself,' cried she; 'and, from this hour, I conjure you to wipe from your memory all my folly—all my love—'

With the last word her bosom heaved tumultuously, and she rose in agitation. Wallace now gazed on her with

redoubled wonder. She saw it; and hearing a foot in the passage, turned, and, grasping his hand, said, in a soft and hurried tone, 'Forgive, that what is entwined with my heart, should cost me some pangs to wrest thence again! only respect me, and I am comforted.' Wallace in silence pressed her hand, and the door opened.

Lady Ruthven entered. The Countess, whose present aim was to throw the virtue of Wallace off its guard, and to take that by sap, which she found resisted open attack, with a penitential air disappeared by another passage. Edwin's gentle mother was followed by the same youth who had brought Helen's packet to Berwick. It was Walter Hay, anxious to be recognised by his benefactor, to whom his recovered health had rendered his person strange. Wallace received him with kindness, and told him to bear his grateful respects to his lady, for her care of her charge. Lord Ruthven with others, soon entered; and, at the appointed hour, they attended their chief to the citadel.

The council-hall was already filled with the lords who had brought their clans to the Scottish standard. On the entrance of Wallace, they rose; and Mar coming forward, followed by the heralds and other officers of ceremony, saluted him with the due forms of Regent, and led him to the throne. Wallace ascended; but it was only to take thence a packet, which had been deposited for him on its cushion; and coming down again, he laid the parchment on the council-table.

'I can do all things best,' said he, 'when I am upon a level with my friends.' He then broke the seal of the packet. It was from the Prince of Wales, agreeing to Wallace's proposed exchange of prisoners; but denouncing him as the instigator of the rebellion, and threatening him with a future judgment from his incensed king, for the mischief he had wrought in the realm of Scotland. The letter was finished with a demand, that the town and citadel of Berwick should be surrendered to England, as a gage for the quiet of the borders till Edward should return.

Kirkpatrick scoffed at the audacious menace of the young prince. 'He should come amongst us, like a man,' cried he; 'and we would soon show him, who it is that works mischief in Scotland! Ay, even on his back, we would write the chastisement due to the offender.'

'Be not angry with him, my friend,' returned Wallace; 'these threats are words of course from the son of Edward. Did he not fear both our rights, and our arms, he would not so readily accord with our propositions. You see, every Scottish prisoner is to be on the borders by a certain day! and, to satisfy that impatient valour, (which I, your friend, would never check, but when it loses itself in a furor too nearly resembling that of our enemies;) I intend to make your prowess once again the theme of their discourse. You will retake your castles in Annandale!'

'Give me but the means to recover those stout gates of our country,' cried Kirkpatrick, 'and I will warrant you to keep the keys in my hand till doomsday.'

Wallace resumed: 'Three thousand men are at your command. When the prisoners pass each other on the Cheviots, the armistice will terminate. You may then fall back on Annandale; and, that night, light your own fires in Torthorald! Send the expelled garrisons into Northumberland! and show this haughty prince, that we know how to replenish his depopulated towns.'

'But first I will set my mark on them!' cried Kirkpatrick, with one of those laughs, which ever preluded some savage proposal.

'I can guess, it would be no gentle one,' returned Wallace: 'Why, brave knight, will you ever sully the fair field of your fame, with an ensanguined tide?'

'It is the fashion of the times,' replied Kirkpatrick, roughly: 'you only, my victorious general, who, perhaps, have most cause to go with the stream, have chosen a path of your own. But look around! see our burns, which the Southrons made run with Scottish blood; our hillocks, swoln with the cairns of our slain; the highways blocked

up with the graves of the murdered; our lands filled with maimed clansmen, who purchased life of our ruthless tyrants, by the loss of eyes and limbs! And, shall we talk of gentle methods, with the perpetrators of these horrors? Sir William Wallace, you would make women of us.'

'Shame, shame! Kirkpatrick!' resounded from every voice, 'you insult the Regent!'

Kirkpatrick stood proudly frowning, with his left hand on the hilt of his sword. Wallace, by a motion, hushed the tumult, and spoke—'No true chief of Scotland can offer me greater respect, than frankly to trust me with his sentiments.'

'Though we disagree in some points,' cried Kirkpatrick, 'I am ready to die for him at any time; for I believe a trustier Scot treads not the earth; but I repeat, why, by this mincing mercy, seek to turn our soldiers into women?'

'I seek to make them men,' replied Wallace; 'to be aware that they fight with fellow-creatures, with whom they may one day be friends: and not like the furious savages of old Scandinavia, drink the blood of eternal enmity. I would neither have my chieftains set examples of cruelty, nor degrade themselves by imitating the barbarities of our enemies. That Scotland bleeds at every pore, is true; but let peace be our aim, and we shall heal all her wounds.'

'Then I am not to cut off the ears of the freebooters in Annandale?' cried Kirkpatrick, with a good-humoured smile: 'Have it as you will, my general; only, you must new christen me, to wash the war-stain from my hand. The rite of my infancy was performed as became a soldier's son: my font was my father's helmet; and the first pap I sucked, lay on the point of his sword.[1]

[1] All who are conversant with the traditionary accounts of the ancient Scottish manners, must be well acquainted with these barbarous customs. They were employed to perpetuate a ferocity against their enemies, similar to that which was inculcated by resembling means into the young Hannibal.—(1809.)

'You have not shamed your nurse!' cried Murray.

'Nor will I,' answered Kirkpatrick, 'while the arm that slew Cressingham remains unwithered.'

While he spoke, Ker entered, to ask permission to introduce a messenger from Earl de Warenne. Wallace gave consent. It was Sir Hugh le de Spencer, a near kinsman of the Earl of Hereford, the tumultuary constable of England. He was the envoy who had brought the Prince of Wales's despatches to Stirling. Wallace was standing when he entered, and so were the chieftains, but at his appearance they sat down. Wallace retained his position.

'I come,' cried the Southron knight, 'from the Lord Warden of Scotland; who, like my prince, too greatly condescends, to do otherwise than command, where now he treats; I come to the leader of this rebellion, William Wallace, to receive an answer to the terms granted by the clemency of my master, the son of his liege lord, to this misled kingdom.'

'Sir Knight,' replied Sir William Wallace, 'when the Southron lords delegate a messenger to me, who knows how to respect the respresentative of the nation to which he is sent, and the agents of his own country, I shall give them my reply. You may withdraw.'

The Southron stood, resolute to remain where he was: 'Do you know, proud Scot,' cried he, 'to whom you dare address this imperious language? I am the nephew of the lord high constable of England.'

'It is pity,' cried Murray, looking cooly up from the table, 'that he is not here to take his kinsman into custody!'

Le de Spencer fiercely half drew his sword: 'Sir, this insult——'

'Must be put up with,' cried Wallace, interrupting him, and motioning Edwin to lay his hand on the sword; 'you have insulted the nation to which you were sent on a peaceful errand; and having thus invited the resentment of every chief here present, you cannot justly complain

against their indignation. But in consideration of your youth, and probable ignorance of what becomes the character of an ambassador, I grant you the protection your behaviour has forfeited. Sir Alexander Scrymgeour,' said he, turning to him, 'you will guard Sir Hugh le de Spencer to the Earl de Warenne; and tell that nobleman I am ready to answer any proper messenger.'

The young Southron, frowning, followed Scrymgeour from the hall; and Wallace, turning to Murray, 'My friend,' said he, 'it is not well to stimulate insolence, by repartee. This young man's speech though an insult to the nation, was directed to me; and by me only it ought to have been answered; and that seriously. The haughty spirit of this man should have been quelled, not incensed; and, had you proceeded one word further, you would have given him an apparently just cause of complaint against you; and of that, my friend, I am most sensibly jealous. It is not policy, nor virtue, to be rigorous to the extent of justice.'

'I know,' returned Murray, blushing, 'that my wits are too many for me; ever throwing me, like Phaeton's horses, into the midst of some fiery mischief. But pardon me now, and I promise to rein them close, when next I see this prancing knight.'

'Bravo, my Lord Andrew!' cried Kirkpatrick, in an affected whisper, 'I am not always to be bird alone, under the whip of our Regent; you have had a few stripes, and now look a little of my feather!'

'Like as a swan to a vulture, good Roger,' answered Murray.

Wallace attended not to this tilting of humour between the chieftains, but engaged himself in close discourse with the elder nobles, at the higher end of the hall. In half an hour, Scrymgeour returned; and with him Baron Hilton. He brought an apology from De Warenne, for the behaviour of his ambassador; and added his persuasions to the demands of England, that the Regent would surrender

Berwick, not only as a pledge for the Scots keeping the truce on the borders, but as a proof of his confidence in Prince Edward.

Wallace answered, that he had no reason to show extraordinary confidence in one, who manifested, by such a requisition, that he had no faith in Scotland; and therefore, neither as a proof of confidence, nor as a gage of her word, should Scotland, a victorious power, surrender the eastern door of her kingdom, to the vanquished. Wallace declared himself ready to dismiss the English prisoners to the frontiers, and to maintain the armistice till they had reached the south side of the Cheviots: 'But,' added he, 'my word must be my bond; for by the honour of Scotland, I will give no other.'

'Then,' answered Baron Hilton, with an honest flush passing over his cheek, as if ashamed of what he had next to say, 'I am constrained to lay before you, the last instructions of the Prince of Wales to Earl de Warenne.'

He took a royally sealed roll of vellum from his breast, and read aloud:

'Thus saith Edward Prince of Wales, to Earl de Warenne, Lord Warden of Scotland. If that arch-rebel, William Wallace, who now assumeth to himself the rule of all our royal father's hereditary dominions north of the Cheviots, refuseth to give unto us the whole possession of the town and citadel of Berwick-upon-Tweed, as a pledge of his faith, to keep the armistice on the borders from sea to sea; we command you to tell him, that we shall detain under the ward of our good lieutenant of the Tower in London, the person of William the Lord Douglas, as a close captive; until our prisoners, now in Scotland, arrive safely at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This mark of supremacy over a rebellious people, we owe as a pledge of their homage to our royal father; and as a tribute of our gratitude to him, for having allowed us to treat at all with so undutiful a part of his dominions.

'(Signed,) Edward, P.W.'

'Baron,' cried Wallace, 'it would be beneath the dignity of Scotland, to retaliate this act with the like conduct. The exchange of prisoners shall yet be made, and the armistice held sacred on the borders. But, as I hold the door of war open in the interior of the country; before the Earl de Warenne leaves this citadel, (and it shall be on the day assigned;) please the Almighty Lord of Justice, the Southron usurpers of all our castles on the eastern coast, shall be our hostages for the safety of Lord Douglas!'

'And this is my answer, noble Wallace!'

'It is: and you see no more of me till that which I have said is done.'

Baron Hilton withdrew. And Wallace, turning to his peers, rapidly made dispositions for a sweeping march from frith to frith; and having sent those who were to accompany him, to prepare for departure next day at dawn; he retired with the Lords Mar and Bothwell, to arrange affairs relative to the prisoners.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GOVERNOR'S APARTMENTS

The sun rose on Wallace and his brave legions, as they traversed the once romantic glades of Strathmore; but now the scene was changed. The villages were abandoned, and the land lay around in uncultivated wastes. Sheep, without a shepherd, fled wild from the approach of man; and wolves issued, howling, from the cloisters of depopulated monasteries. The army approached Dumblane; but it was without inhabitant; grass grew in the streets; and the birds which roosted in the desert dwellings flew scared from the windows, as the trumpet of Wallace sounded through the town. Loud echoes repeated the summons from its hollow walls; but no other voice was heard, no human face appeared; for the ravening hand of Cressingham had been there!

They proceeded over many a hill and plain, and found that the same withering touch of desolation had burnt up and overwhelmed the country. Wallace saw that his troops were faint for want of food; cheering them, he promised that Ormsby should provide them a feast in Perth; and, with re-awakened spirits, they took the river Tay at its fords, and were soon before the walls of that well-armed city. But it was governed by a coward; and Ormsby fled to Dundee at the first sight of the Scottish army. His flight might have warranted the garrison to surrender without a blow; but a braver man being his lieutenant, sharp was the conflict before Wallace could compel that officer to abandon the ramparts.

This enterprise achieved, Wallace, with a host of prisoners, turned his steps towards the Forth; but ere he left the banks of the Tay, and Dee, he detached 3,000 men, under the command of Lord Ruthven; giving him a commission to range the country from the Carse of Gowrie, to remotest Sutherland; and in all that tract, reduce every town and castle which had admitted a Southron garrison. Wallace took leave of Lord Ruthven at Huntingtower; and that worthy nobleman, when he assumed, with the government of Perth, this extensive command, said, as he grasped the Regent's hand, 'I say not, bravest of Scots, what is my gratitude for thus making me an arm of my country, but deeds will show!'

A rapid march, round by Fifeshire, (through which victory followed their steps,) brought the conqueror, and his troops, again within sight of the towers of Stirling. It was on the eve of the day which, he had promised Earl de Warenne, should see the English prisoners depart for the borders. No doubt of his arriving at the appointed time, was entertained by the Scots, or by the Southrons in the castle; the one knew the sacredness of his word; and the other, having felt his prowess, would not so far disparage their own, as to suppose that any could withstand him, by whom they were beaten.

De Warenne, as he stood on the battlements of the keep, beheld, from afar, the long line of Scottish soldiers as they descended the Ochil hills. When he pointed it out to De Valence, that nobleman, against the evidence of his eyesight, contradicted the observation of the veteran earl.

'Your sight deceives you,' said he, 'it is only the sunbeams playing on the cliffs.'

'Then those cliffs are moving ones,' cried De Warenne, 'which, I fear, have ground our countrymen on the coast to powder! We shall find Wallace here before sunset; to show us how he has resented the affront, our ill-advised prince cast on his jealous honour.'

'His honour,' returned De Valence, 'is like that of his countrymen's; an enemy alike to his own interest, and to that of others. Had it allowed him to accept the crown of Scotland, and so have fought Edward with the concentrating arm of a king; or would he even now, offer peace to our sovereign, granting his prerogative as liege lord of the country, all might go well; but as the honour, you speak of, prevents his using these means of ending the contest, destruction must close his career.'

'And what quarrel,' demanded De Warenne, 'can you, my Lord de Valence, have against this nice honour of Sir William Wallace, since you allow it secures the final success of our cause?'

'His honour, and himself, are hateful to me!' impatiently answered De Valence. 'He crosses me in my wishes, public and private. And did he not expose me, threaten me with an ignominious death, on the walls of Stirling?'

'But was it, before he saw the Earl of Mar, with his hapless family, brought, with halters on their necks, to be suspended from this very tower?—Ah! what a tale has the lovely Countess told me of that direful scene!'

'I care not,' cried De Valence, 'what are, or are not the offences of this domineering Wallace, but I hate him; and my respect for his advocates, cannot but correspond with that feeling.' As he spoke, that he might not be further

molested by the arguments of De Warenne, he abruptly turned away, and left the battlements.

Pride would not allow the enraged earl to confess his private reasons for this vehement enmity against the Scottish chief. A conference which he had held the preceding evening with Lord Mar, was the cause of this augmented hatred; and, from that moment, the haughty Southron vowed the destruction of Wallace, by open attack, or secret treachery. Ambition, and the base counterfeit of love, those two master passions in untempered minds, were the springs of this antipathy. The instant in which he knew that the young creature, whom, at a distance, he discerned clinging around the Earl of Mar's neck in the streets of Stirling, was the same Lady Helen, on whose account Lord Soulis had poured on him such undeserved invectives in Bothwell Castle; curious to have a nearer view of one, whose transcendent beauty he had often heard celebrated by others, he ordered her to be immediately conveyed to his apartments in the citadel.

On their first interview, he was more struck by her personal charms, than he had ever been with any woman's; although few were so noted for gallantry in the English court, as himself. He could hardly understand the nature of his feelings, while discoursing with her. To all others of her sex, he had declared his enamoured wishes, with as much ease as vivacity; but when he looked on Helen, the admiration her loveliness inspired, was checked by an indescribable awe. No word of passion escaped his lips; he sought to win her, by a deportment consonant with her own dignity of manners; and obeyed all her wishes, excepting when they pointed to any communication with her parents.

De Valence, therefore, seeing the anguish of her fears for her father, and hearing the fervour with which she implored for his life, adopted the plan of granting the Earl reprieves from day to day; and in spite of the remonstrances of Cressingham, he intended to grant to her

father's release, on condition of her yielding herself to be his.

Ambition, as well as love, impelled him to this resolution; for he aspired to the dignity of Lord Warden of Scotland; and, he foresaw, that the vast influence which his marriage with the daughter of Mar must give him in the country, would be a decisive argument with the King of England.

To this purpose, not doubting the Scottish Earl's acceptance of such a son-in-law, on the very day that Wallace marched towards the coast, De Valence sent to request an hour's private audience of Lord Mar. He could not then grant it; but at noon, next day, they met in the governor's apartments.

The Southron, without much preface, opened his wishes, and proffered his hand for the Lady Helen; 'I will make her the proudest lady in Great Britain,' continued he; 'for she shall have a court in my Welsh province, little inferior to that of Edward's queen.'

'Pomp would have no sway with my daughter,' replied the Earl; 'it is the princely mind she values, not its pageantry. Whomsoever she prefers, the tribute will be paid to the merit of the object, not to his rank; and therefore, Earl, should it be you, the greater will be your pledge of happiness. I shall repeat to her what you have said; and to-morrow deliver her answer.'

Not deeming it possible that it should be otherwise than favourable, De Valence allowed his imagination to roam over every anticipated delight. He exulted in the pride with which he would show this perfection of northern beauty, to the fair of England: how would the simple graces of her seraphic form, which looked more like a being of air than of earth, put to shame the laboured beauties of the court!

Full of these anticipations, he attended the Governor of Stirling the next day, to hear his daughter's answer. But unwilling to give the Earl that advantage over him, which a knowledge of his views in the marriage might occasion, he

affected a composure he did not feel; and with a lofty air entered the room, as if he were come rather to confer than to beg a favour. This deportment did not lessen the satisfaction with which the brave Scot opened his mission.

'My Lord, I have just seen my daughter. She duly appreciates the honour you would confer on her; she is grateful for all your courtesies, whilst she was your prisoner; but beyond that sentiment, her heart, attached to her native land, cannot sympathise with your wishes.'

De Valence started. He did not expect anything in the shape of a denial; but supposing, that perhaps a little of his own art was tried by the father, to enhance the value of his daughter's yielding, he threw himself into a chair, and affecting chagrin at a disappointment (which he did not believe was seriously intended), exclaimed with vehemence, 'Surely, Lord Mar, this is not meant as a refusal? I cannot receive it as such, for I know Lady Helen's gentleness; I know the sweet tenderness of her nature would plead for me, were she to see me at her feet, and hear me pour forth the most ardent passion that ever burnt in a human breast. Oh, my gracious Lord, if it be her attachment to Scotland, which alone militates against me, I will promise that her time shall be passed between the two countries. Her marriage with me, may facilitate that peace with England, which must be the wish of us all; and perhaps the Lord Wardenship, which De Warenne now holds, may be transferred to me. I have reasons for expecting that it will be so; and then, she, as a queen in Scotland, and you as her father, may claim every distinction from her fond husband, every indulgence for the Scots, which your patriot heart can dictate. This would be a certain benefit to Scotland; while the *ignis fatuus* you are now following, however brilliant may be its career during Edward's absence, must, on his return, be extinguished in disaster, and infamy.'

The silence of the Earl of Mar, who, willing to hear all that was in the mind of De Valence, had let him proceed

uninterrupted, encouraged the Southron lord to say more than he had at first intended to reveal; but when he made a pause, and seemed to expect an answer, the Earl spoke:—

'I am fully sensible of the honour you would bestow upon my daughter, and myself, by your alliance; but, as I have said before, her heart is too devoted to Scotland, to marry any man whose birth does not make it his duty to prefer the liberty of her native land, even before his love for her. That hope, to see our country freed from a yoke unjustly laid upon her,—that hope, which you, not considering our rights, or weighing the power that lies in a just cause, denominate an *ignis fatuus*, is the only passion, I believe, that lives in the gentle bosom of my Helen; and therefore, noble Earl, not even your offers, can equal the measure of her wishes.'

At this speech, De Valence bit his lip with real disappointment; and starting from his chair, now in unaffected disorder; 'I am not to be deceived, Lord Mar,' cried he; 'I am not to be cajoled, by the pretended patriotism of your daughter; I know the sex too well, to be cheated with these excuses. The *ignis fatuus*, that leads your daughter from my arms, is not the freedom of Scotland, but the handsome rebel who conquers in its name! He is now fortune's minion: but he will fall, Lord Mar, and then, what will be the fate of his mad adherents?'

'Earl de Valence,' replied the veteran, 'sixty winters have checked the tides of passion in my veins; but the indignation of my soul, against any insult offered to my daughter's delicacy, or to the name of the Lord Regent of Scotland, is not less powerful in my breast! You are my prisoner; and I pardon, what I could so easily avenge. I will even answer you: and say, that I do not know of any exclusive affection subsisting between my daughter, and Sir William Wallace; but this I am assured of, that were it the case, she would be more ennobled in being the wife of so true a patriot, and so virtuous a man, than were she

advanced to the bosom of an emperor. And for myself! were he to-morrow hurled by a mysterious Providence from his present nobly-won elevation, I should glory in my son, were he such; and, would think him as great on a scaffold, as on a throne.'

'It is well that is your opinion,' replied De Valence, stopping in his wrathful strides; 'cherish these heroics, for you will assuredly see him so exalted. Start not, old man,—for by all the powers of hell I swear, that some eyes which now look proudly on the Southron host, shall close in blood!

'But were you wise enough to embrace the advantage I offer, you might be a prophet of good, to your nation; for all that you could promise, I would take care should be fulfilled. But you cast from you your peace and safety; my vengeance shall therefore take its course. I rely not on oracles of heaven, nor hell; but I have pronounced the doom of my enemies: and though you now see me a prisoner,—tremble, haughty Scot, at the resentment which lies in this head and heart! This arm, perhaps, needs not the armies of Edward, to pierce you in your boast!'

He left the room as he spoke; and Lord Mar, shaking his venerable head as he disappeared, said to himself—'Impotent rage of passion and of youth, I pity and forgive you!'

It was not, therefore, so extraordinary that De Valence when he saw Wallace descending the Ochil hills, with the flying banners of new victories, should break into curses of his fortune, and swear, inwardly, the most determined revenge.

Fuel was added to this fire, at sunset, when the almost measureless defiles of prisoners, marshalled before the ramparts of Stirling, and taking the usual oath to Wallace, met his view.

'To-morrow, we quit these dishonouring walls,' cried he to himself; 'but ere I leave them, if there be power in gold, or strength in my arm, he shall die!'

CHAPTER XXVIII

CHAPEL IN SNAWDOUN

THE Regent's re-entrance into the citadel of Stirling, being on the evening preceding the day he had promised should see the English lords depart for their country; De Warenne, as a mark of respect to a man whom he could not but regard with admiration, went to the barbican-gate to bid him welcome.

Wallace appeared; and as the cavalcade of noble Southrons, who had lately commanded beyond the Tay, followed him, Murray glanced his eye around, and said with a smile to De Warenne, 'You see, Sir Earl, how we Scots keep our word!' and then he added, 'You leave Stirling to-morrow; but these remain, till Lord Douglas opens their prison-doors.'

'I cannot but acquiesce in the justice of your commander's determination,' returned De Warenne; 'and to comfort these gentlemen under their captivity, I can only tell them, that if anything can reconcile them to the loss of liberty, it is being the prisoners of Sir William Wallace.'

After having transferred his captives to the charge of Lord Mar, Wallace went alone to the chamber of Montgomery; to see whether the state of his wounds would allow him to march on the morrow. While he was yet there, an invitation arrived from the Countess of Mar, requesting his presence at an entertainment which, by her husband's consent, she meant to give that night at Snawdoun, to the Southron lords before their departure for England.

'I fear you do not dare expend your strength on this party?' inquired Wallace, turning to Montgomery.

'Certainly not,' returned he; 'but I shall see you amidst your noble friends, at some future period. When the peace, your arms must win, is established between the two nations, I shall then revisit Scotland; and openly declare my friendship for Sir William Wallace.'

As Wallace pressed the hand of his new friend, to leave him to repose, a messenger entered from Lord Mar, to request the Regent's presence in his closet. He found him with Lord de Warenne.

The latter presented him with another despatch from the Prince of Wales. It was to say, that news had reached him of Wallace's design to attack the castles garrisoned by England, on the eastern coast. Should this information prove true, he (the Prince) declared, that as a punishment for such increasing audacity, he would put Lord Douglas into closer confinement; and while the Southron fleets would inevitably baffle Wallace's attempts; the moment the exchange of prisoners was complete on the borders, an army from England should enter Scotland, and ravage it with fire and sword.

When Wallace had heard this despatch, he smiled and said, 'The deed is done, my Lord de Warenne. Both the castles and the fleets are taken; and what punishment must we now expect from this terrible threatener?'

'Little from him, or his headlong counsellors,' replied De Warenne; 'but Thomas Earl of Lancaster, the King's nephew, is come from abroad with a numerous army. He is to conduct the Scottish prisoners to the borders; and then, to fall upon Scotland with all his strength; unless you previously surrender, not only Berwick, but Stirling, and the whole of the district between the Forth and the Tweed, into his hands.'

'My Lord de Warenne,' replied Wallace, 'you can expect but one return to these absurd demands. I shall accompany you myself to the Scottish borders, and there make my reply.'

De Warenne, who did indeed look for this answer, replied, 'I anticipated that such would be your determination; and I have to regret that the wild counsels which surround my prince, precipitate him into conduct which must draw much blood on both sides, before his royal father's presence can regain what he has lost.'

'Ah, my Lord,' replied Wallace, 'is it to be nothing but war? Have you now a stronghold of any force, in all the Highlands? is not the greater part of the Lowlands free? and before this day month, not a rood of land in Scotland, is likely to hold a Southron soldier. We conquer, but it is for our own. Why then this unreceding determination to invade us? Not a blade of grass, would I disturb on the other side of Cheviot, if we might have peace. Let Edward yield us that, and though he has pierced us with many wounds, we will yet forgive him.'

De Warenne shook his head: 'I know my King too well, to expect pacific measures. He may die with the sword in his hand; but he will never grant an hour's repose to this country, till it submits to his sceptre.'

'Then,' replied Wallace, 'the sword must be the portion of him and his!—Ruthless tyrant! If the blood of Abel called for vengeance on his murderer, what must be the phials of wrath, which are reserved for thee?'

A flush overspread the face of De Warenne at this apostrophe: and forcing a smile, 'This strict notion of right,' said he, 'is very well in declamation; but how would it crop the wings of conquerors, and shorten the warrior's arm, did they measure by this rule!'

'How would it, indeed!' replied Wallace; 'and that they should, is most devoutly to be wished. All warfare that is not defensive, is criminal; and he who draws his sword to oppress, or merely to aggrandise, is a murderer and a robber. This is the plain truth, Lord de Warenne.'

'I have never considered it in that light,' returned the Earl, 'nor shall I turn philosopher now. I revere your principle, Sir William Wallace; but it is too sublime to be mine. Nay, nor would it be politic, for one who holds his possessions in England by the right of conquest, to question the virtue of the deed. By the sword my ancestors gained their estates; and with the sword, I have no objection to extend my territories.'

Wallace now saw that De Warenne, though a man of honour, was not one of virtue. Though his amiable nature, made him gracious in the midst of hostility; and his good dispositions, would not allow him to act disgracefully in any concern; yet, duty to God, seemed a poet's flight, to him. Educated in the forms of religion, without knowing its spirit, he despised them; and believing the Deity too wise to be affected by mere virtuous shows of any kind; his ignorance of the sublime benevolence, which disdains not to provide food even for the 'sparrow ere it falls,' made him think the Creator of all too great to care about the actions of men: hence, being without the true principles of good,—virtue, as virtue, was nonsense to Earl de Warenne.

Wallace did not answer his remark, and the conference soon closed.

Though burning with stifled passions, Earl de Valence accepted the invitation of Lady Mar. He hoped to see Helen; to gain her ear for a few minutes; and above all, to find some opportunity, during the entertainment, of taking his meditated revenge on Wallace. The dagger seemed the surest way; for, could he render the blow effectual, he should not only destroy the rival of his wishes, but, by ridding his monarch of a powerful foe, deserve every honour at the royal hands. Love and ambition again swelled his breast; and with recovered spirits, and a glow on his countenance, which reawakened hope had planted there, he accompanied De Warenne to the palace.

The hall for the feast was arrayed with feudal grandeur. The seats at the table spread for the knights of both countries, were covered with highly-wrought stuffs; while the emblazoned banners, and other armorial trophies of the nobles, being hung aloft according to the degree of the owner, each knight saw his precedence, and where to take his place. The most costly meats, with the royally attired peacock, served up in silver and gold dishes; and wine of the rarest quality, sparkled on the board. During

the repast, two choice minstrels were seated in the gallery above, to sing the friendship of King Alfred of England, with Gregory the Great of Caledonia. The squires, and other military attendants of the nobles present, were placed at tables in the lower part of the hall, and served with courteous hospitality.

Resentful, alike at his captivity, and thwarted passion, De Valence had hitherto refused to show himself beyond the ramparts of the citadel; he was therefore surprised, on entering the hall of Snawdoun with De Warenne, to see such regal pomp; and at the command of the woman, who had so lately been his prisoner at Dumbarton; and whom (because she resembled an English lady who had rejected him) he had treated with the most rigorous contempt. Forgetting these indignities, in the pride of displaying her present consequence, Lady Mar came forward to receive her illustrious guests. Her dress corresponded with the magnificence of the banquet; a robe of cloth of Baudkins, enriched, while it displayed the beauties of her person; her wimple blazed with jewels, and a superb carkanet, emitted its various rays from her bosom.

De Warenne followed her with his eyes, as she moved from him. With an unconscious sigh, he whispered De Valence, 'What a land is this, where all the women are fair, and the men all brave!'

'I wish that it, and all its men and women were in perdition!' returned De Valence in a fierce tone. Lady Ruthven, entering with the wives and daughters of the neighbouring chieftains, checked the further expression of his wrath; and his eyes sought amongst them, but in vain, for Helen.

The chieftains of the Scottish army, with the Lords Buchan and March, were assembled around the Countess, at the moment a shout from the populace without announced the arrival of the Regent. His noble figure was now disencumbered of armour; and with no more sumptuous garb, than the simple plaid of his country, he

appeared effulgent, in manly beauty, and the glory of his recent deeds. De Valence frowned heavily, as he looked on him; and thanked his fortunate stars, that Helen was absent from sharing the admiration which seemed to animate every breast. The eyes of Lady Mar, at once told the impassioned De Valence, too well read in the like expressions, what were her sentiments towards the young Regent; and the blushes, and eager civilities of the ladies around, displayed how much they were struck with the now fully discerned and unequalled graces of his person. Lady Mar forgot all in him. And indeed so much did he seem the idol of every heart, that from the two venerable lords of Loch-awe and Bothwell, to the youngest man in company, all ears hung on his words, all eyes upon his countenance.

The entertainment was conducted with every regard to that chivalric courtesy, which a noble conqueror always pays to the vanquished. Indeed, from the wit and pleasantry which passed from the opposite sides of the tables, and in which the ever gay Murray was the leader, it rather appeared a convivial meeting of friends, than an assemblage of mortal foes. During the banquet, the bards sung legends of the Scottish worthies, who had brought honour to their nation in days of old; and as the board was cleared, they struck at once into a full chorus. Wallace caught the sound of his own name, accompanied with epithets of extravagant praise; he rose hastily from his chair, and with his hand motioned them to cease. They obeyed; but Lady Mar remonstrating with him, he smilingly said, it was an ill omen to sing a warrior's actions till he were incapable of performing more; and therefore he begged she would excuse him from hearkening to his.

'Then let us change their strains to a dance,' replied the Countess.

'A hall! a hall!' exclaimed Murray, springing from his seat, delighted with the proposal.

'I have no objection,' answered Wallace; and putting the hand she presented to him, into that of Lord de Warenne; he added, 'I am not of a sufficiently gay temperament, to grace the change; but this Earl may not have the same reason for declining so fair a challenge!'

Lady Mar coloured with mortification; for she had thought, that Wallace would not venture to refuse, before so many; but following the impulse of De Warenne's arm, she proceeded to the other end of the hall; where, by Murray's quick arrangement, the younger lords of both countries had already singled out ladies, and were marshalled for the dance.

As the hours moved on, the spirits of Wallace subsided from their usual cheering tone, into a sadness which he thought might be noticed; and wishing to escape observation, (for he could not explain to those gay ones, why scenes like these ever made him sorrowful,) and whispering to Mar, that he would go for an hour to visit Montgomery, he withdrew, unnoticed by all but his watchful enemy.

De Valence, who hovered about his steps, had heard him inquire of Lady Ruthven, why Helen was not present. He was within hearing of this whisper also, and, with a Satanic joy, the dagger shook in his hand. He knew that Wallace had many a solitary place to pass, between Snawdoun and the citadel; and the company being too pleasantly absorbed, to mark who entered or disappeared, he took an opportunity, and stole out after him.

But, for once, the impetuous fury of hatred, met a temporary disappointment. While De Valence was cowering like a thief under the eaves of the houses, and prowling along the lonely paths, to the citadel; while he started at every noise, as if it came to apprehend him for his meditated deed; or rushed forward at the sight of any solitary passenger, whom his eager vengeance almost mistook for Wallace; Wallace, himself, had taken a different track.

As he walked through the illuminated archways, which led from the hall, he perceived a darkened passage. Hoping, by that avenue, to quit the palace unobserved, he immediately struck into it; for he was aware, that should he go the usual way, the crowd at the gate would recognise him, and he could not escape their acclamations. He followed the passage for a considerable time, and at last was stopped by a door. It yielded to his hand, and he found himself at the entrance of a large building. He advanced; and passing a high screen of carved oak; by a dim light, which gleamed from waxen tapers on the altar, he perceived it to be the chapel.

'A happy transition,' said he to himself, 'from the jubilant scene I have now left; from the grievous scenes I have lately shared!—Here, gracious God,' thought he, 'may I, unseen by any other eye, pour out my heart to Thee. And here, before Thy footstool, will I declare my thanksgiving for Thy mercies; and, with my tears, wash from my soul, the blood I have been compelled to shed!'

While advancing towards the altar, he was startled by a voice, proceeding from the quarter whither he was going, and with low and gently-breathed fervour, uttering these words:—'Defend him, Heavenly Father! Defend him day and night, from the devices of this wicked man: and, above all, during these hours of revelry and confidence, guard his unshielded breast from treachery and death.' The voice faltered, and added with greater agitation, 'Ah, unhappy me, that I should be the cause of danger to the hope of Scotland; that I should pluck peril on the head of William Wallace!' A figure, which had been hidden by the rails of the altar, with these words rose, and stretching forth her clasped hands, exclaimed, 'But Thou, who knowest I had no blame in this, wilt not afflict me by his danger! Thou wilt deliver him, O God, out of the hand of this cruel foe!'

Wallace was not more astonished, at hearing that some one, in whom he reposed, was his secret enemy;

than at seeing Lady Helen in that place, at that hour, and addressing Heaven for him. There was something so celestial in the maid, as she stood in her white robes, true emblems of her own innocence, before the divine footstool; that, although her prayers were delivered with a pathos, which told they sprang from a heart more than commonly interested in their object; yet every word and look breathed so eloquently, the virgin purity of her soul, the hallowed purpose of her petitions; that Wallace, drawn by the sympathy, with which kindred virtues ever attract spirit to spirit, did not hesitate to discover himself. He stepped from the shadow, which involved him. The pale light of the tapers, shone upon his advancing figure. Helen's eyes fell upon him, as she turned round. She was transfixed, and silent. He moved forward. 'Lady Helen,' said he, in a respectful, and even tender voice. At the sound, a fearful rushing of shame, seemed to overwhelm her faculties; for she knew not how long he might have been in the church, and that he had not heard her beseech Heaven, to make him less the object of her thoughts. She sunk on her knees beside the altar, and covered her face with her hands.

The action, the confusion, might have betrayed her secret to Wallace. But he only thought of her pious invocations for his safety; he only remembered that it was she who had given a holy grave to the only woman he could ever love: and, full of gratitude, as a pilgrim would approach a saint, he drew near to her. 'Holiest of earthly maids,' said he, kneeling down beside her; 'in this lonely hour, in the sacred presence of Almighty Purity, receive my soul's thanks for the prayers I have this moment heard you breathe for me! They are more precious to me, Lady Helen, than the generous plaudits of my country; they are a greater reward to me, than would have been the crown, with which Scotland sought to endow me; for, do they not give me, what all the world cannot,—the protection of Heaven!'

'I would pray for it!' softly answered Helen, but not venturing to look up.

'The prayer of meek goodness, we know, "availeth much." Continue, then, to offer up that incense for me,' added he, 'and I shall march forth to-morrow with redoubled strength; for I shall think, holy maid, that I have yet a Marion to pray for me on earth, as well as one in heaven!'

Lady Helen's heart beat, at these words; but it was with no unhallowed emotion. She withdrew her hands from her face, and clasping them, looked up:—'Marion will indeed echo all my prayers; and He who reads my heart, will, I trust, grant them! They are for your life, Sir William Wallace,' added she, turning to him with agitation, 'for it is menaced.'

'I will inquire by whom,' answered he, 'when I have first paid my duty at this altar, for guarding it so long. And dare I, daughter of goodness, to ask you, to unite the voice of your gentle spirit, with the secret one of mine? I would beseech Heaven, for pardon on my own transgressions; I would ask of its mercy, to establish the liberty of Scotland. Pray with me, Lady Helen; and the invocations our souls utter, will meet the promise of Him, who said, "Where two or three are joined together in prayer, there am I in the midst of them."'

Helen looked on him with a holy smile; and pressing the crucifix, which she held, to her lips, bowed her head on it in mute assent. Wallace threw himself prostrate on the steps of the altar; and the fervour, of his sighs alone, breathed to his companion, the deep devotion of his soul. How the time passed, he knew not; so was he absorbed in the communion which his spirit held in heaven, with the most gracious of beings. But the bell of the palace striking the matin hour, reminded him he was yet on earth; and looking up, his eyes met those of Helen. His devotional rosary hung on his arm: he kissed it:—'Wear this, holy maid,' said he, 'in remembrance of this hour!' She

bowed her fair neck, and he put the consecrated chain over it: 'Let it bear witness to a friendship,' added he, clasping her hands in his, 'which will be cemented by eternal ties in heaven.'

Helen bent her face upon his hands: he felt the sacred tears of so pure a compact, upon them; and while he looked up, as if he thought the spirit of his Marion hovered near, to bless a communion, so remote from all infringement of the sentiment he had dedicated for ever to her, Helen raised her head—and, with a terrible shriek, throwing her arms around the body of Wallace, he, that moment, felt an assassin's steel in his back, and she fell senseless on his breast. He started on his feet; a dagger fell from his wound to the ground, but the hand which had struck the blow, he could nowhere see. To search further, was then impossible, for Helen lay on his bosom like one dead. Not doubting that she had seen his assailant, and fainted from alarm, he was laying her on the steps of the altar, that he might bring some water from the basin of the chapel to recover her, when he saw that her arm was not only stained with his blood, but streaming with her own. The dagger had gashed it in reaching him.

'Execrable villain!' cried he, turning cold at the sight; and instantly comprehending, that it was to defend him, she had thrown her arms around him, he exclaimed in a voice of agony, 'Are two of the most matchless women, the earth ever saw, to die for me!' Trembling with alarm, and with renewed grief; for the terrible scene of Ellerslie, was now brought in all its horrors before him; he tore off her veil, to stanch the blood; but the cut was to wide for his surgery: and losing every other consideration, in fears for her life, he again took her in his arms, and bore her out of the chapel. He hastened through the dark passage, and almost flying along the lighted galleries, entered the hall. The noisy fright of the servants, as he broke through their ranks at the door, alarmed the revellers; and turning round, what was their astonishment to behold the Regent,

Wallace Carries Helen into the Banquet Hall

pale and streaming with blood, bearing in his arms a lady apparently lifeless, and covered with the same dreadful hue!

Mar instantly recognised his daughter; and rushed towards her, with a cry of horror. Wallace sunk, with his breathless load, upon the nearest bench; and, while her head rested on his bosom, ordered surgery to be brought. Lady Mar gazed on the spectacle with a benumbed dismay. None present durst ask a question, till a priest drawing near, unwrapped the arm of Helen, and discovered its deep wound.

'Who has done this?' cried her father, to Wallace, with all the anguish of a parent in his countenance.

'I know not,' replied he; 'but, I believe, some villain who aimed at my life.'

'Where is Lord de Valence?' exclaimed Mar, suddenly recollecting his menaces against Wallace.

'I am here,' replied he in a composed voice: 'would you have me seek the assassin?'

'No, no,' cried the Earl, ashamed of his suspicion; 'but here has been some foul work,—and my daughter is slain.'

'Oh, not so!' cried Murray, who had hurried towards the dreadful group, and knelt at her side: 'she will not die —so much excellence cannot die.' A stifled groan from Wallace accompanied by a look, told Murray, that he had known the death of similar excellence. With this unanswerable appeal the young chieftain dropped his head on the other hand of Helen; and, could any one have seen his face, buried as it was in her robes, they would have beheld tears of agony drawn from that ever-gay heart.

The wound was closed by the aid of another surgical priest, who had followed the former into the hall; and Helen sighed convulsively. At this intimation of recovery, the priest made all, excepting those who supported her, stand back. But, as Lady Mar lingered near Wallace, she saw the paleness of his countenance turn to a deadly

hue, and his eyes closing, he sunk back on the bench. Her shrieks now resounded through the hall; and falling into hysterics she was taken into the gallery, while the more collected Lady Ruthven remained, to attend the victims before her.

At the instant Wallace fell, De Valence, losing all self-command, caught hold of De Warenne's arm, and whispering, 'I thought it was sure;—Long live King Edward!' rushed out of the hall. These words revealed to De Warenne, who was the assassin; and though struck to the soul with the turpitude of the deed, he thought the honour of England would not allow him to accuse the perpetrator; and he remained silent.

The inanimate body of Wallace was now drawn from under that of Helen: and, in the act, discovered the tapestry-seat clotted with blood, and the Regent's back, bathed in the same vital stream. Having found his wound, the priests laid him on the ground; and were administering their balsams, when Helen opened her eyes. Her mind was too strongly possessed with the horror which had entered it before she became insensible, to lose the consciousness of her fears; and immediately looking around her with an aghast countenance, her sight met the outstretched body of Wallace.—'Oh! is it so?' cried she, throwing herself into the bosom of her father. He understood what she meant:—'He lives, my child! but he is wounded like yourself. Have courage; revive for his sake and for mine!'

'Helen! Helen! dear Helen!' cried Murray, clinging to her hand, 'while you live, what that loves you can die!'

While these acclamations surrounded her couch, Edwin, in speechless apprehension, supported the insensible head of Wallace; and De Warenne, inwardly execrating the perfidy of De Valence, knelt down to assist the good friars in their office.

A few minutes longer, and the stanched blood refluxing to the chieftain's heart, he too opened his eyes; and

instantly turning on his arm—'What has happened to me? Where is Lady Helen?' demanded he.

At his voice, which aroused Helen; who, believing that he was indeed dead, was relapsing into her former state, she could only press her father's hand to her lips; as if he had given the life she so valued, and bursting into a shower of relieving tears, breathed out her rapturous thanks to God. Her low murmurs reached the ears of Wallace.

The dimness having left his eyes; and the blood, (the extreme loss of which, from his great agitations, had alone caused him to swoon,) being stopped by an embalmed bandage, he seemed to feel no impediment from his wound; and rising, hastened to the side of Helen. Lord Mar softly whispered his daughter,—'Sir William Wallace is at your feet, my dearest child; look on him, and tell him that you live.'

'I am well, my father,' returned she, in a faltering voice; 'and, may it indeed please the Almighty, to preserve him!'

'I too, am alive, and well,' answered Wallace: 'but thanks to God, and to you, blessed lady, that I am so! Had not that lovely arm, received the greater part of the dagger, it must have reached my heart.'

An exclamation of horror, at what might have been, burst from the lips of Edwin. Helen could have re-echoed it; but she now held her feelings under too severe a rein, to allow them so to speak.

'Thanks to the Protector of the just,' cried she, 'for your preservation! Who raised my eyes, to see the assassin! His cloak was held before his face, and I could not discern it; but I saw a dagger aimed at the back of Sir William Wallace! How I caught it, I cannot tell, for I seemed to die on the instant.'

Lady Mar, having recovered, re-entered the hall, just as Wallace had knelt down beside Helen. Maddened with the sight of the man, on whom her soul doted, in

such a position before her rival, she advanced hastily; and in a voice, which she vainly attempted to render composed and gentle, sternly addressed her daughter-in-law: 'Alarmed as I have been by your apparent danger, I cannot but be uneasy at the attendant circumstances: tell me, therefore, and satisfy this anxious company, how it happened that you should be with the Regent, when we supposed you an invalid in your room; and were told he was gone to the citadel?'

A crimson blush overspread the cheeks of Helen at this question; for it was delivered in a tone, which insinuated that something more than accident had occasioned their meeting: but, as innocence dictated, she answered, 'I was in the chapel at prayers; Sir William Wallace entered with the same design; and at the moment he desired me to mingle mine with his, this assassin appeared; and (she repeated,) I saw his dagger raised against our protector, and I saw no more.'

There was not a heart present, that did not give credence to this account, but the polluted one of Lady Mar. Jealousy almost laid it bare. She smiled incredulously, and turning to the company, 'Our noble friends will accept my apology, if in so delicate an investigation I should beg that my family alone may be present.'

Wallace perceived the tendency of her words; and not doubting the impression they might make on the minds of men, ignorant of the virtues of Lady Helen, he instantly rose. 'For once,' cried he, 'I must counteract a lady's orders. It is my wish, lords, that you will not leave this place, till I explain how I came to disturb the devotions of Lady Helen. Wearied with festivities, in which my alienated heart can so little share, I thought to pass an hour with Lord Montgomery in the citadel; and in seeking to avoid the crowded avenues of the palace, I entered the chapel. To my surprise, I found Lady Helen there. I heard her pray for the happiness of Scotland, for the safety of her defenders; and my mind being in a frame

to join in such petitions, I apologised for my unintentional intrusion, and begged permission to mingle my devotions with hers. Nay, impressed, and privileged, by the sacredness of the place, I presumed still further; and before the altar of purity, poured forth my gratitude for the duties she had paid to the remains of my murdered wife. It was at this moment, that the assassin appeared. I heard Lady Helen scream, I felt her fall on my breast, and at that instant the dagger entered my back.

'This is the history of our meeting; and the assassin, whomsoever he may be, and how long soever he was in the church before he sought to perpetrate the deed,—were he to speak, and capable of uttering truth, could declare no other.'

'But where is he to be found?' intemperately, and suspiciously, demanded Lady Mar.

'If his testimony, be necessary to validate mine,' returned Wallace with dignity, 'I believe Lady Helen can point to his name.'

'Name him, Helen; name him, my dear cousin!' cried Murray; 'that I may have some link with thee, O! let me avenge this deed! Tell me his name! and so yield me all that thou canst now bestow on Andrew Murray!'

There was something in the tone of Murray's voice, that penetrated to the heart of Helen. 'I cannot name him whom I suspect, to any but Sir William Wallace: and I would not do it to him,' replied she, 'were it not to warn him against future danger. I did not see the assassin's face; therefore how dare I set you to take vengeance on one who perchance may be innocent? I forgive him my blood, since Heaven has spared to Scotland its protector's.'

'If he be a Southron,' cried Baron Hilton, coming forward, 'name him, gracious lady; and I will answer for it, that were he the son of a king, he would meet death from our monarch, for this unknightly outrage.'

'I thank your zeal, brave chief,' replied she; 'but I would not abandon to certain death, even a wicked man.

May he repent! I will name him to Sir William Wallace alone; and when he knows his secret enemy, the vigilance of his own honour, I trust, will be his guard.—Meanwhile, my father, I would withdraw.' Then whispering him, she was lifted in his arms, and Murray's, and carried from the hall.

As she moved away, her eyes met those of Wallace. He rose; but she waved her hand to him, with an expression in her countenance, of an adieu so firm, yet so tender, that feeling as if he were parting with a beloved sister, who had just risked her life for him, and whom he might never see again, he uttered not a word to any that were present, but leaning on Edwin, left the hall by an opposite door.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CHEVIOTS

As Wallace pursued his march along the once fertile, and well-peopled valleys of Clydesdale, their present appearance affected him like the sight of a friend whom he had seen depart in all the graces of youth and prosperity; but met again overcome with disease and wretchedness.

The pastures of Carstairs on the east of the river, which used at this season to be whitened with sheep, and sending forth the lowings of abundant cattle; and the vales, which had teemed with reapers, rejoicing in the harvest, were now laid waste and silent. The plain presented one wide flat of desolation. Where once was the enamelled meadow, a dreary swamp extended its vapoury surface; and the road which a happy peasantry no longer trod, lay choked up with thistles and rank grass; while birds, and animals of chase, would spring from its thickets, on the lonely traveller, to tell him by their wild astonishment, that he was distant from even the haunts of men. The remains of villages were visible; but the blackness of ashes, marked the walls of the ruined dwellings.

Wallace felt that he was passing through the country in which his Marion had been rifled of her life; and as he moved along, nature all around seemed to have partaken her death. As he rode over the moors which led towards the district of Crawford Lammington, those hills amidst which the beloved of his soul first drew breath, he became totally silent. Time rolled back; he was no longer the Regent of Scotland, but the fond lover of Marion Braidfoot. His heart beat as it was wont to do, in turning his horse down the defile which led direct to Lammington: but the scene was completely changed; the groves in which he had so often wandered with her, were gone: they had been cut down for the very purpose of destroying that place, which had once been the abode of beauty and innocence, and of all the tender charities.

It was then arranged between the young chief and his commander, that watch-towers should be thrown up on every conspicuous eminence throughout the country, from the heights of Clydesdale to those which skirted the Scottish borders, whence concerted signals of victories, or other information, might be severally interchanged. These preliminaries adjusted, the Regent's bugle brought Ker and Sir John Graham to his side. The appointed number of men were left with Murray; and Wallace, joining his other chieftains, bade his friend and honest servant adieu.

He now awakened to a sense of the present scene, and speeded his legions over hill and dale, till they entered on the once luxuriant banks of the Annan;—this territory of some of the noblest in Scotland, till Bruce, their chief, deserted them! It lay in more terrific ruin than even the tracts he had left. There reigned the silence of the tomb; here existed the expiring agonies of men left to perish. Recent marks of devastation smoked from the blood-stained earth; and, in the midst of a barren waste, a few houseless wretches rushed forward at sight of the Regent, threw themselves before his horse, and begged a morsel of food for their famishing selves and dying infants. 'Look,'

cried an almost frantic mother, holding towards him the living skeleton of a child; 'my husband was slain by the Southrons who hold Lochmaben Castle; my subsistence was carried away, and myself turned forth to give birth to this child on the rocks. We have fed, till this hour, on the wild berries; but I die, and my child expires before me!' A second group, with shrieks of despair, cried aloud, 'Here are our young ones, exposed to equal miseries. Give us bread, Regent of Scotland, or we perish!'

Wallace turned to his troops: 'Fast for a day, my brave friends,' cried he; 'lay the provisions you have brought with you before these hapless people. To-morrow you shall feast largely on Southron tables.'

He was instantly obeyed. As his men marched on, they threw their loaded wallets amongst the famishing groups, and, followed by their blessings, descended with augmented speed the ravaged hills of Annandale. Dawn was brightening the dark head of Brunswark as they advanced towards the Scottish boundary. At a distance, like a wreath of white vapours, lay the English camp along the southern bank of the Esk. At this sight Wallace ordered his bugles to sound. They were immediately answered by those of the opposite host. The heralds of both armies advanced; and the sun, rising from behind the eastern hills, shone full upon the legions of Scotland winding down the romantic precipices of Wauchope.

Two hours arranged every preliminary to the exchange of prisoners; and, when the clarion of the trumpet announced that each party was to pass over the river to the side of its respective country, Wallace stood in the midst of his chieftains to receive the last adieus of his illustrious captives. When De Warenne approached, the Regent took off his helmet. The Southron had already his in his hand. 'Farewell, gallant Scot,' said he; 'if aught could embitter this moment of recovered freedom, it is that I leave a man I so revere still confident in a finally hopeless cause!'

'It would not be the less just were it indeed desperate,' replied Wallace; 'but had not Heaven shown on which side it fought, I should not now have the honour of thus bidding the brave De Warenne farewell.'

The Earl passed on; and the other lords, with grateful and respectful looks, paid their obeisance. The litter of Montgomery drew near: the curtains were thrown open: Wallace stretched out his hand to him: 'The prayers of sainted innocence are thine!'

'Never more shall her angel spirit behold me here as you now behold me,' returned Montgomery: 'I must be a traitor to virtue before I ever again bear arms against Sir William Wallace.' Wallace pressed his hand, and they parted.

The escort which guarded De Valence advanced, and the proud Earl, seeing where his enemy stood, took off his gauntlet, and throwing it fiercely towards him, exclaimed: 'Carry that to your minion Ruthven, and tell him the hand that wore it will yet be tremendously revenged!'

As the Southron ranks filed off towards Carlisle, those of the returning Scottish prisoners approached their deliverer. Now it was that the full clangour of joy burst from every breast and triumph-breathing instrument in the Scottish legions; now it was that the echoes rang with loud huzzas of 'Long live the valiant Wallace, who brings our nobles out of captivity! Long live our matchless Regent!'

As these shouts rent the air, the Lords Badenoch and Athol drew near. The princely head of the former, bent with proud acknowledgment, to the mild dignity of Wallace. Badenoch's penetrating eye saw that it was indeed the patriotic guardian of his country to whom he bowed, and not the vain affector of regal power. At his approach Wallace alighted from his horse, and received his offered hand and thanks with every grace inherent in his noble nature: 'I am happy,' returned he, 'to have been the instrument of recalling to my country one of

the princes of her royal blood.'—'And while one drop of it exists in Scotland,' replied Badenoch, 'its possessor must acknowledge the bravest of our defenders in Sir William Wallace.'

Athol next advanced; but his gloomy countenance contradicted his words when he attempted to utter a similar sense of obligation. Sir John Monteith was eloquent in his thanks. And Sir William Maitland was not less sincere in gratitude than Wallace was in joy, at having given liberty to so near a relation of Helen Mar. The rest of the captive Scots, to the number of several hundreds, were ready to kiss the feet of the man who thus restored them to their honours, their country, and their friends; and Wallace bowed his happy head under a shower of blessings which poured on him from a thousand grateful hearts.

In pity to the wearied travellers, he ordered tents to be pitched; and for the sake of their distant friends, he despatched a detachment to the top of Langholm-hill, to send forth a smoke[1] in token to the Clydesdale watch, of the armistice being ended. He had hardly seen it ascend the mountain, when Graham arrived from reconnoitring; and told him, that an English army of great strength were approaching by the foot of the more southern hills, to take the reposing Scots by surprise.

'They shall find us ready to receive them,' was the prompt reply of Wallace; and his actions were ever the companions of his words. Leaving the new-arrived Scots, to rest on the banks of the Esk, he put himself at the head of 5,000 men; and despatching a thousand more, with Sir John Graham, to pass the Cheviots; and be in ambush to attack Southrons when he should give the signal; he marched swiftly forward, and soon fell in with some advanced squadrons of the enemy, amongst the recesses of

[1] There are hills in Annandale and Clydesdale, called *Watches*, where persons in old times were stationed to give different signals appointed by their commanders. These notices were communicated with wonderful rapidity, by smoke in the day and flame at night.—(1809.)

those hills. Little expecting such a rencontre, they were marching in defiles upon the lower ridgy craigs, to avoid the swamps which occupied the broader way.

At sight of the Scots, Lord Percy, the Southron commander, ordered a party of his archers to discharge their arrows. The artillery of war being thus opened afresh, Wallace drew his bright sword, and waving it before him, just as the sun set, called aloud to his followers. His inspiring voice echoed from hill to hill; and the higher detachments of the Scots, pouring downwards with the resistless impetuosity of their own mountain streams, precipitated their enemies into the valley; while Wallace, with his pikemen, charging the horse in those slippery paths, drove the terrified animals into the morasses; where some sunk at once, and others, plunging, threw their riders, to perish in the swamp.

Desperate at the confusion which now ensued; as his archers fell headlong from the rocks, and his cavalry lay drowning before him; Lord Percy called up his infantry:—they appeared; but though ten thousand strong, the determined Scots met their first ranks breast to breast; and levelling them with their companions, rushed on the rest with the force of a thunder-storm. It was at this period, that the signal was given from the horn of Wallace; and the division of Graham, meeting the retreating Southrons as they attempted to form behind the hill, completed their defeat. The slaughter became dreadful, the victory decisive. Sir Ralph Latimer, the second in command, was killed in the first onset; and Lord Percy himself, after fighting as became his brave house, fled, covered with wounds, towards Alnwick.

This being the season of harvest in the northern counties of England, Wallace carried his reapers, not to lay their sickles to the field, but, with their swords, to open themselves a way into the Southron granaries.

The careful victor, meanwhile, provided for the wants of his friends on the other side of the Esk. The plunder of

Percy's camp was despatched to them; which, being abundant in all kinds of provisions, was more than sufficient to keep them in ample store till they could reach Stirling. From that point, the released chiefs had promised their Regent they would disperse to their separate estates, collect recruits, and reduce the distracted state of the country into some composed order. Wallace had disclosed his wish, and mode of effecting this renovation of public happiness, before he left Stirling. It contained a plan of military organisation; by which each youth, able to bear arms, should not only be instructed in the dexterous use of the weapons of war, but in the duties of subordination; and above all, have the nature of the rights for which he was to contend, explained to him.

The graver council at Stirling, had received his plan with enthusiasm. And when, on the day of his parting with the released chiefs on the banks of the Esk, with all the generous modesty of his nature, he submitted his design to them, rather to obtain their approbation as friends, than to enforce it with the authority of a Regent; when they saw him, thus coming down from the dictatorship to which his unrivalled talents had raised him, to equal himself still with them, all were struck with admiration; and Lord Badenoch could not but mentally exclaim, 'The royal qualities of this man, can well afford this expense of humility. Bend as he will, he has only to speak, to show his superiority over all, and to be sovereign again.'

There was a power in the unostentatious virtues of Wallace, which, declaring themselves rather in their effects than by display, subdued the princely spirit of Badenoch; and while the proud chief recollected, how he had contemned the pretensions of Bruce, and could not brook the elevation of Baliol; how his soul was in arms, when, after he had been persuaded to acknowledge the supremacy of Edward, the throne was given to one of his rivals; he wondered at himself, to find that his very heart bowed before the gentle and comprehensive wisdom of an untitled Regent.

Athol, alone of the group, seemed insensible to the benefits his country was deriving from its resistless protector; but he expressed his dissent from the general sentiment, with no more visible sign than a cold silence.

When the messenger from Wallace arrived on the banks of the Esk with so large a booty, and the news of his complete victory over the gallant Percy, the exultation of the Scottish nobles knew no bounds.

On Badenoch opening the Regent's despatches, he found they repeated his wish, for his brave coadjutors to proceed to the execution of the plan they had sanctioned with their approbation; they were to march directly for Stirling; and in their way, dispense the superabundance of the plunder, amongst the perishing inhabitants of the land. He then informed that Earl, that while the guard he had left with him would escort the liberated Scots beyond the Forth, the remainder of the troops should be thus disposed:—Lord Andrew Murray, was to remain chief in command in Clydesdale; Sir Eustace Maxwell, to give up the wardship of Douglas to Sir John Monteith; and then advance into Annandale, to assist Sir Roger Kirkpatrick; who must now have begun the reduction of the castles, in the west of that province. At the close of this account, Wallace added, that himself, with his brave band, were going to traverse the English counties to the Tees mouth; and should Heaven bless his arms, he would send the produce, round by the Berwick fleet, to replenish the exhausted stores of the Highlands. 'Next year,' continued he, 'I trust they will have ample harvests of their own.'

And, what Wallace said he hoped to do, he did.

The Southrons' country was panic-struck at the defeat of Percy: his beaten army, flying in all directions before the conquering legions, gave such dreadful, and hyperbolical accounts of their might, and of the giant prowess of their leader; that as soon as ever the Scottish spears were seen rising the summit of any hill, or even gleaming along the horizon, every village was deserted, every cot left

without inhabitant; and corn, and cattle, and every kind of property, fell into the hands of the Scots.

Lord Percy lay immovable with wounds, in his castle at Alnwick; and his hopeless state, by intimidating his followers, contradicted the orders he gave, to face the marauding enemy. Several times they attempted to obey, but as often showed their inability. They collected under arms; but the moment their foe appeared, they fled within the castle walls, or buried themselves in deep obscurities amongst the surrounding hills. Not a sheaf in the fields of Northumberland, did the Scots leave, to knead into bread for its earl; not a head of cattle, to smoke upon his board. The country was sacked, from sea to sea. But far different was its appearance, from that of the trampled valleys of Scotland. There, fire had burnt up the soil; the hand of violence had levelled the husbandman's cottage; had buried his implements in the ruins; had sacrificed himself, on its smoking ashes! There, the fatherless babe wept its unavailing wants; and at its side sat the distracted widow, wringing her hands in speechless misery; for there lay her murdered husband—here, her perishing child!

With such sights, the heart of Wallace had been pierced, when he passed through the lowland counties of his country; nay, as he scoured the highland districts of the Grampians, even there had he met the foot of barbarian man, and cruel desolation. For thus it was that the Southron garrisons had provisioned themselves:—by robbing the poor of their bread; and, when they resisted, firing their dwellings, and punishing the refractory with death.

But not so, the generous enmity of Sir William Wallace. His commission was, not to destroy, but to save; and though he carried his victorious army to feed on the Southron plains, and sent the harvests of England, to restore the wasted fields of Scotland, yet he did no more. No fire, blasted his path; no innocent blood, cried against him from the ground!—When the impetuous zeal of his

soldiers, flushed with victory, and in the heat of vengeance, would have laid several hamlets in ashes, he seized the brand from the destroying party, and throwing it into an adjoining brook; 'Show yourselves worthy the advantages you have gained,' cried he, 'by the moderation with which you use them. Consider yourselves as the soldiers of the All-powerful God, who alone has conducted you to victory; for, with a few, has He not enabled us to subdue a host?—Behave, as becomes your high destiny; and debase not yourselves by imitating the hirelings of ambition, who receive as the wages of their valour, the base privilege to ravage, and to murder.

'I wish you to distinguish between a spirit of reprisal, in what I do, and that of retaliation, which actuates your present violence. What our enemies have robbed us of, as far as they can restore, I take again. Their bread, shall feed our famishing country; their wool, clothe its nakedness. But blood for blood, unless the murderer could be made to bleed, is a doctrine abhorrent to God, and to humanity. What justice is there in destroying the habitations and lives of a set of harmless people, because the like cruelty has been committed by a lawless army of their countrymen, upon our unoffending brethren? Your hearts may make the answer. But if they are hardened against the pleadings of humanity, let prudence show your interest in leaving those men alive, and with their means unimpaired, who will produce other harvests, if need be, to fill our scantier granaries.

'Thus I reason with you; and I hope many are convinced: but they who are insensible to argument, must fear authority; and I declare, that every man who inflicts injury on the houses, or on the persons, of the quiet peasantry of this land, shall be punished as a traitor to the state.'

According to the different dispositions of men, this reasoning prevailed. And, from the end of September

(the time when Wallace first entered Northumberland), to the month of November, when (having scoured the counties of England, even to the gates of York,) he returned to Scotland, not an offence was committed, which could occasion his merciful spirit, regret. It was on All Saints' Day, when he again approached the Esk; and so great was his spoil, that his return seemed more like some vast caravan moving the merchandise of half the world, than the march of an army, which had so lately passed that river, a famishing, though valorous host.

The out-posts of Carlaveroch, soon informed Maxwell, the Lord Regent was in sight. At the joyful intelligence, a double smoke streamed from every watch-hill in Annandale; and Sir Eustace had hardly appeared on the Solway bank, to meet his triumphant chief, when the eager speed of the rough knight of Torthorald brought him there also. Wallace, as his proud charger plunged into the ford, and the heavy waggons groaned after him, was welcomed to the shore by the shouts, not only of the soldiers, which had followed Maxwell and Kirkpatrick, but by the people, who came in crowds to hail their preserver. The squalid hue of famine had left every face; and each smiling countenance, beaming with health, security, and gratitude, told Wallace, more emphatically than a thousand tongues, the wisdom of the means he had used to regenerate his country.

Maxwell had prepared the fortress of Lochmaben, once the residence of Bruce, for the reception of the Regent. And thither Wallace was conducted, in prouder triumph than ever followed the chariot wheels of Cæsar. Blessings were the clarions that preceded him; and hosts of people, whom he had saved when ready to perish, were voluntary actors in his pageant.

When he arrived in sight of the two capacious lochs, which spread like lucid wings on each side of the castle, he turned to Graham; 'What pity,' said he, 'that the

rightful owner of this truly regal dwelling, does not act as becomes his blood! He might now be entering its gates as a king, and Scotland find rest under its lawful monarch.'

'But he prefers being a parasite in the court of a tyrant,' replied Sir John; 'and from such a school, Scotland would reject its king.'

'But he has a son,' replied Wallace; 'a brave and generous son!—I am told by Lord Montgomery, who knew him in Guienne, that a nobler spirit does not exist. On his brows, my dear Graham, we must hope one day to see the crown.'

'Then only as your heir, my Lord Regent,' interrupted Maxwell; 'for while you live, I can answer for it, that no Scot will acknowledge any other ruler.'

'I will first eat my own sword,' cried Kirkpatrick.

At this moment, the portcullis of the gate was raised; and Maxwell falling back to make way for the Regent, Wallace had not time to answer a sentiment, now so familiar to him, by hearing it from every grateful heart, that he hardly remarked its tendency: a fact, the more easily to be believed, from the ambition of such reward never receiving acceptance in his well-principled mind.

Ever pressing towards establishing the happiness of his country, he hastened over the splendid repast that was prepared for him; and dispensing with the ceremonials, with which the zeal of Maxwell sought to display his respect for the virtues and station of his commander, he retired with Graham to write despatches, and to apportion shares of the spoil to the necessities of the provinces. In these duties, his wakeful eyes were kept open the greatest part of the night. They for whom he laboured slept securely! That thought was rest to him. But they closed not their eyes without praying for the sweet repose of their benefactor. And he found it; not in sleep, but in that peace of heart which the world cannot give.

CHAPTER XXX

LAMMINGTON

Day succeeded day, in the execution of these beneficial designs. When fulfilled, the royal halls of Lochmaben did not long detain him, who knew no satisfaction, but when going about doing good. While he was thus employed, raising with the quickness of magic, by the hands of his soldiers, the lately ruined hamlets, into well-built villages; while the grey smoke, curled from a thousand russet cottages, which now spotted the sides of the snow-clad hills; while all the lowlands, whithersoever he directed his steps, breathed of comfort and abundance; he felt like the father of a large family, in the midst of a happy and vast home, where every eye turned on him with reverence, every lip with gratitude.

He had hardly gone the circuit of these now cheerful valleys, when an embassy from England, which had first touched at Lochmaben, overtook him at the tower of Lammington. The ambassadors were Edmund Earl of Arundel (a nobleman who had married the only sister of De Warenne), and Anthony Beck, Bishop of Durham.

At the moment their splendid cavalcade, escorted by a party from Sir Eustace Maxwell, entered the gate of Lammington, Wallace was in the hourly expectation of Edwin; and hearing the trampling of horses, he hastened into the court-yard, attended by Gregory's grand-children. One was in his arms, two others held by his plaid, and a third played with the sword he had unbuckled from his side. It was a clear frosty day; and the keenness of the air brightened the complexion of Wallace, while it deepened the roses of his infant companions. The leader of the Scottish escort immediately proclaimed to the ambassadors that this was the Regent. At sight of so uncourtly a scene, the haughty prelate of Durham drew back.

'This man will not understand his own interest,' said he, in a disdainful whisper, to Lord Arundel.

'I am inclined to think, his estimation of it will be beyond ours.' As the Earl made this reply, the officer of Maxwell informed Wallace of the names, and errand of the illustrious strangers. At the mention of a Southron, the elder children ran screaming in the house; leaving the youngest, who continued on the breast of Wallace.

The bishop drew near.

'We come, Sir William Wallace,' cried the prelate, in a tone whose lordly pitch lowered, when his surprised eye saw the princely dignity which shone over the countenance of the man, whose domestic appearance, when descried at a distance, had excited his contempt; 'we come from the King of England, with a message for your private ear.'

'And I hope, gallant chief,' joined Lord Arundel, 'what we have to impart, will give peace to both nations; and establish, in honour, the most generous, as well as the bravest of enemies.'

Wallace bowed to the Earl's compliment; (he knew, by his title, he must be the brother of De Warenne;) and, resigning the child into the arms of Graham, with a graceful welcome he conducted the Southron lords into the hall.

Lord Arundel looking around, said, 'Are we alone, Sir William?'

'Perfectly,' he replied; 'and I am ready to receive any proposals for peace, which the rights of Scotland will allow her to accept.'

The Earl drew from his bosom a gold casket, and laying it on a table before him, addressed the Regent:—'Sir William Wallace, I come to you, not with the denunciations of an implacable liege lord, whom a rash vassal has offended; but in the grace of the most generous of monarchs, anxious to convert a brave insurgent into a loyal friend. My lord the King, having heard, by letters from my brother-in-law, the Earl De Warenne, of the honourable manner with which you treated the English, whom the

fate of battle threw into your power; his majesty, instead of sending over from Flanders a mighty army to overwhelm this rebellious kingdom, has deputed me, even as an ambassador, to reason with the rashness, he is ready to pardon. Also, with this diadem,' continued the Earl, drawing a circlet of jewels from the casket, 'which my brave sovereign tore from the brows of a Saracen prince, on the ramparts of Acre, he sends the assurance of his regard for the heroic virtues of his enemy. And, to these jewels, he commands me to say, he will add a more efficient crown,—if Sir William Wallace will awake from this trance of false enthusiasm; and acknowledge, as he is in duty bound to do, *the supremacy of England over this country.*— Speak but the word, noblest of Scots,' added the Earl, 'and the Bishop of Durham has orders from the generous Edward, immediately to anoint you King of Scotland;— that done, my royal master will support you on your throne, against every man who may dare to dispute your authority.'

At these words, Wallace rose from his seat.—'My Lord,' said he, 'since I took up arms for injured Scotland, I have been used to look into the hearts of men; I therefore estimate with every due respect, the compliment which this message of your King, pays to my virtues. Had he thought that I deserved the confidence of Scotland, he would not have insulted me with offering a price for my allegiance. To be even a crowned vassal of King Edward, is far beneath my ambition. Take back the Saracen's diadem: it shall never dishonour the brows of him, who has sworn by the Cross, to maintain the independence of Scotland, or to lay down his life in the struggle.'

'Weigh well, brave sir,' resumed the Earl, 'the consequences of this answer. Edward will soon be in England; he will march hither himself; not at the head of such armies as you have discomfited, but with countless legions; and when he falls upon any country in indignation, the places of its cities are known no more.'

'Better for a brave people so to perish,' replied Wallace, 'than to exist in dishonour.'

'What dishonour, noble Scot, can accrue from acknowledging the supremacy of your liege lord? or to what can the proudest ambition in Scotland extend, beyond that of possessing its throne?'

'I am not such a slave,' cried Wallace, 'as to prefer, what men might call aggrandisement, before the higher destiny, of preserving to my country its birthright independence. To be the guardian of her laws, and of the individual rights of every man born on Scottish ground, is my ambition. Ill should I perform the one duty, were I to wrong the posterity of Alexander, by invading their throne; and horrible would be my treason against the other, could I sell my confiding country, for a name and a bauble, into the grasp of an usurper.'

'Brand not, with so unjust an epithet, the munificent Edward!' interrupted Lord Arundel; 'let your own noble nature be a witness of his. Put from you all the prejudices, which the ill conduct of his officers have excited; and you must perceive, that in accepting his terms, you will best repay your country's confidence, by giving it peace.'

'So great would be my damning sin, in such an acceptance,' cried Wallace, 'that I should be abhorred by God and man. You talk of noble minds, Earl; look into your own; and will it not tell you, that in the moment a people bring themselves to put the command of their actions, and with that their consciences, into the hands of an usurper, (and that Edward is one in Scotland, our annals, and his tyrannies, declare,) they sell their birthright, and become unworthy the name of men?—In that deed, they abjure the gift with which God had intrusted them; and justly, the angels of His host depart from them.—You know the sacred axiom—*Virtue is better than life!* By that, we are commanded to preserve the one, at the expense of the other; and we are ready to obey.—Neither the threats, nor the

blandishments of Edward, have power to shake the resolves of them who "draw the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"'

'Rebellious man!' exclaimed Beck, who had listened impatiently; and whose haughty spirit could ill brook such towering language being directed to *his* sovereign; 'since you dare quote Scripture to sanction crime, hear my embassage. To meet the possibility of this flagitious obstinacy, I came armed with the thunder of the church; and the indignation of a justly incensed monarch. Accept his most gracious offers, delivered to you by the Earl of Arundel. Here is the cross, to receive your oath of fealty,' cried he, stretching it forth, as if he thought his commands were irresistible; 'but beware! keep it with a truer faith, than did the traitor Baliol, or expect the malediction of Heaven,—the exterminating vengeance of your liege lord!'

Wallace was not discomposed by this attack from the stormy prelate: 'My Lord of Durham,' replied he, with his usual tranquil air, 'had your sovereign sent me such proposals as became a just king, and were possible for an honest Scot to admit, he should have found me ready to have treated him with the respect due to his rank and honour. But when he demands the sacrifice of my integrity; when he asks me to sign a deed, that would again spread this renovated land with devastation; were I to consider the glozing language of his embassy as grace and nobleness, I should belie my own truth; which tramples alike on his menaces, and his pretended claims.—And I ask, you, priest of Heaven! is he a God greater than Jehovah, that I should fear him?'

'And durst thou presume, audacious rebel!' exclaimed Beck, 'that the light of Israel deigns to shine on a barbarian nation, in arms against a hero of the cross? Reprobate that thou art, answer to thine own condemnation! Does not the church declare the claims of Edward to be just! and who dares gainsay her decrees?'

'The voice of Him, you pretend to serve! He is no respecter of persons; He raises the poor from the dust; and by his arm, the tyrant and his host are plunged into the whelming waves! Bishop, I know in whom I trust. Is the minister, greater than his Lord, that I should believe the word of a synod, against the declared will of God? Neither anathema, nor armed thousands, shall make me acknowledge the supremacy of Edward. He may conquer the body, but the soul of a patriot he can never subdue.'

'Then,' cried Beck, suddenly rising, black with choler, and stretching his crosier over the head of Wallace, 'as the rod of Moses, shed plagues, miseries, and death, over the land of Egypt, I invoke the like judgments, to fall on this rebellious land; on its blasphemous leader! And thus I leave it my curse.'

Wallace smiled, as the terrific words fell from the lips of this demon in sacred guise. Lord Arundel observed him: 'You despise this malediction, Sir William Wallace! I thought more piety had dwelt with so much military nobleness!'

'I should not regard the curses of a congregated world,' replied Wallace, 'when my conscience as loudly proclaims, that God is on my side. And is He not omniscient, that He should be swayed by the prejudices of men? Does He not read the heart? Is He not master of all causes? And shall I shrink, when I know that I hold His commission? Shall I not regard these anathemas, even as the artillery with which the adversary would drive me from my post? But did the clouds rain fire, and the earth open beneath me, I would not stir; for I know who planted me here; and as long as He wills me to stand, neither men nor devils can move me hence.'

'Thou art incorrigible!' cried Beck.

'I would say, firm,' rejoined Arundel, overawed by the majesty of virtue, 'could I regard, as he does, the cause he has espoused. But, as it is, noble Wallace,' continued

he, 'I must regret your infatuation; and instead of the peace I thought to leave with you, hurl war, never-ending, extirpating war, upon the head of this devoted nation!' As he spoke, he threw his lance[1] against the opposite wall; in which it stuck, and stood shivering; then taking up the casket with its splendid contents, he replaced it in his bosom.

Beck had turned away in wrath from the table; and advancing with a magisterial step to the door, he threw it open; as if he thought, that longer to breathe the same air with the person he had excommunicated, would infect him with his own curses. On opening the door, a group of Scots, who waited in the antechamber, hastened forward. At sight of the prelate, they raised their bonnets, and hesitated to pass. He stood on the threshold, proudly neglectful of their respect. In the next minute, Wallace appeared with Lord Arundel.

'Brave knight,' said the Earl, 'the adieus of a man, as sensible of your private worth, as he regrets the errors of your public opinions, abide with you.'

'Were Edward sensible to virtue, like his brave subjects,' replied the chief, 'I should not fear that another drop of blood need be shed in Scotland, to convince him of his present injustice. Farewell, noble Earl: the generous candour of yourself, and of your brother-in-law, will ever live in the remembrance of William Wallace.'

'Were I a king,' said the Earl, 'I should envy Sir William Wallace!'

'This speech is that of a courtier, or a traitor!' suddenly exclaimed Beck, turning with a threatening brow on Lord Arundel. 'Beware, Earl! for what has now been said, must be repeated to the royal Edward: and he will judge, whether flattery to this proud rebel, be consistent with your allegiance.'

[1] To throw a spear, was an ancient mode of denouncing war.

'Every word that has been uttered in this conference[1] I will myself deliver to King Edward,' replied Lord Arundel; 'he shall know the man, on whom he may be forced by justice to denounce the sentence of rebellion; and when the puissance of his royal arm lays this kingdom at his feet, the virtues of Sir William Wallace may then find the clemency he now contemns.'

Beck did not condescend to listen to the latter part of this explanation; but, proceeding to the court-yard, had mounted his horse, before his worthier colleague appeared from the hall. Taking a gracious leave of Sir John Graham, who attended him to the door, the Earl exclaimed, 'What miracle is before me! Not the mighty mover only, of this wide insurrection, is in the bloom of manhood, but all his generals that I have seen, appear in the very morning of youth! And you conquer our veterans; you make yourselves names, which, with us, are only purchased by long experience, and hairs grown grey in camps and battles!'

'Then by our morning, judge what our day may be,' replied Graham; 'and show your monarch, that as surely as the night of death will in some hour close upon prince and peasant, this land shall never again be overshadowed by his darkness.'

'Listen not to their bold treasons!' cried Beck; and setting spurs to his horse, in no very clerical style he galloped out of the gates. Arundel made some courteous reply to Graham; then bowing to the rest of the Scottish officers who stood around, turned his steed; and, followed by his escort, pursued the steps of the bishop along the snow-covered banks of the Clyde.

When Wallace was joined by Edwin, the happy youth (after expressing delight that Murray then held his head-quarters in Bothwell castle) took from his bosom

[1] Wallace's rejection of King Edward's splendid offers, is noted by the old British historians, and the substance of his answer particularly recorded.—(1809.)

two packets; one from Lord Mar, the other from the Countess. 'My dear cousin,' said he, 'has sent you many blessings; but I could not persuade her to register even one on paper, while my aunt wrote all this. Almost ever since her own recovery, Helen has confined herself to my uncle's sick chamber; now totally deserted by the fair Countess, who seems to have forgotten all duties, in the adulation of the audience-hall.'

Wallace remarked on the indisposition of Mar, and the attention of his daughter, with tenderness. And Edwin, with the unrestrained vivacity of happy friendship, proceeded sportively to describe the regal style which the Countess had affected; and the absurd pomp with which she had welcomed the Earls Badenoch and Athol to their native country. 'Indeed,' continued he, 'I cannot guess what vain idea has taken possession of her; but when I went to Snawdoun, to receive her commands for you, I found her seated on a kind of throne, with ladies standing in her presence, and our younger chieftains thronging the gallery, as if she were the Regent herself. Helen entered for a moment, but, amazed, started back; never before having witnessed the morning courts of her stepmother.'

The substance of the latter part of this scene, Edwin did relate to Wallace. He smiled at the vain follies of the Countess, and broke the seal of her letter. It was in the same style with her conversations; at one moment declaring herself his disinterested friend; in the next, uttering wild professions of never-ending attachment. She deplored the sacrifice which had been made of her, when quite a child, to the doting passion of Lord Mar; and complained of his want of sympathy with any of her feelings. Then picturing the happiness which must result from the reciprocal love of congenial hearts, she ventured to show how truly hers would unite with Wallace's. The conclusion of this strange epistle, told him that the devoted gratitude of all her relations of the house

of Cummin, was ready, at any moment, to relinquish their claims on the crown, to place it on brows so worthy to wear it.

The words of this letter were so artfully, and so persuasively, penned, that had not Edwin described the inebriated vanity of Lady Mar, Wallace might have believed, that she was ambitious only for him; and that could she share his heart, his throne would be a secondary object. To establish this deception in his mind, she added —'I live here as at the head of a court, and fools around me think I take pleasure in it;—but did they look into my actions, they would see that I serve, while I seem to reign. I am working in the hearts of men for your advancement.'

But whether this were her real motive or not, it was the same to Wallace; he felt that she would always be, were she even free, not merely the last object in his thoughts, but the first in his aversion. Therefore hastily running over her letter, he recurred to a second perusal of Lord Mar's. In this he found satisfactory details of the success of his dispositions. Lord Loch-awe had possessed himself of the western coast of Scotland, from the Mull of Kintyre, to the furthest mountains of Glenmore. There the victorious Lord Ruthven had met him; having completed the recovery of the Highlands, by a range of conquests from the Spey to the Murray-frith, and Inverness-shire. Lord Bothwell, also, as his colleague, had brought from the shores of Ross, and the hills of Caithness, every Southron banner, which had disgraced their embattled towers.

Graham was sent for by Wallace, to hear these pleasant tidings.

'Ah!' cried Edwin, in triumph, 'not a spot north of the Forth, now remains, that does not acknowledge the supremacy of the Scottish lion!'

'Nor south of it either!' returned Graham: 'from the Mull of Galloway, to my gallant father's government on

the Tweed; from the Cheviots, to the northern ocean, all now is our own. The door is locked against England; and Scotland must prove unfaithful to herself, before the Southrons can again set foot on her borders.'

The more private accounts, were not less gratifying to Wallace; for he found, that his plans for disciplining, and bringing the people into order, were everywhere adopted; and that in consequence, alarm and penury had given way to peace and abundance. To witness the success of his comprehensive designs, and to settle a dispute between Lord Ruthven, and the Earl of Athol, relative to the government of Perth, Lord Mar strongly urged him (since he had driven the enemy so many hundred miles into their own country) to repair immediately to the scene of controversy. 'Go,' added the Earl, 'through the Lothians, and across the Queen's Ferry, directly into Perthshire. I would not have you come to Stirling, lest it should be supposed that you are influenced in your judgment, either by myself or my wife. But I think there cannot be a question, that Lord Ruthven's services to the great cause, invest him with a claim which his opponent does not possess. Lord Athol has none, beyond that of superior rank; but being the near relation of my wife, I believe she is anxious for his elevation. Therefore, come not near us, if you would avoid female importunity, and spare me the pain of hearing, what I must condemn.'

Wallace now recollected a passage in Lady Mar's letter, which, though not speaking out, insinuated how she expected he would decide: she said,—'As your interest is mine, my noble friend, all that belongs to me, is yours:—my kindred, are not withheld, in the gift my devoted heart bestows on you. Use them as your own; make them bulwarks around your power, the creatures of your will, the instruments of your benevolence, the defenders of your rights.'

CHAPTER XXXI

STANMORE

The gathering word was despatched from chief to chief, to call the clans of the Highlands to meet their Regent by a certain day in Clydesdale. Wallace himself set forward to summon the strength of the Lowlands; but at Kinclavin castle, on the coast of Fife, he was surprised with another embassy from Edward; a herald, accompanied by that Sir Hugh le de Spencer, who had conducted himself so insolently on his first embassage.

On his entering the chamber where the Regent sat with the chiefs who had accompanied him from Perthshire, the two Englishmen walked forward; but before the herald could pay the customary respects, Le de Spencer advanced to Wallace; and, in the pride of a little mind, elated at being empowered to insult with impunity, he broke forth: —'Sir William Wallace, the contumely with which the ambassadors of Prince Edward were treated, is so resented by the King of England, that he invests his own majesty in my person, to tell you,—that your treasons have filled up their measure! that now, in the plenitude of his continental victories, he descends upon Scotland, to annihilate this rebellious nation; and——'

'Stop, Sir Hugh le de Spencer,' cried the herald, touching him with his sceptre; 'whatever may be the denunciations with which our Sovereign has intrusted you, you must allow me to perform my duty, before you declare them.— And thus I utter the gracious message with which his majesty has honoured my mouth.'

He then addressed Wallace: and in the King's name, accusing him of rebellion; and of unfair, and cruel devastations, made in Scotland, and in England; promised him pardon for all, if he would immediately disband his followers, and acknowledge his offence.

Wallace motioned with his hand for his friends to keep silence (for he perceived that two or three of the most violent, were ready to break forth in fierce defiance of King Edward); and being obeyed, he calmly replied to the herald:—'When we were desolate, your King came to us as a comforter; and, he put us in chains! While he was absent, I invaded his country, as an open enemy. I rifled your barns; but it was to feed a people, whom his robberies had left to perish! I marched through your lands, I made your soldiers fly before me; but what spot in all your shores, have I made black with the smoke of ruin? I leave the people of Northumberland to judge between me and your monarch. And that he never shall be mine, or Scotland's, with God's blessing on the right, our deeds shall further prove!'

'Vain and ruinous determination!' exclaimed Le de Spencer: 'King Edward comes against you, with an army that will reach from sea to sea. Wherever the hoofs of his war-horse strike, there grass never grows again. The sword and the fire shall make a desert of this devoted land; and your arrogant head, proud Scot, shall bleed upon the scaffold!'

'He shall first see my fires, and meet my sword in his own fields,' returned Wallace: 'and if God continue my life, I will keep my Easter in England, in despite of King Edward, and of all who bear armour in his country!'

As he spoke, he rose from his chair, and bowing his head to the herald, the Scottish marshals conducted the ambassadors from his presence. Le de Spencer twice attempted to speak, but the marshals would not allow him. They said, that the business of the embassy was now over; and should he presume further to insult their Regent, the privilege of his official character should not protect him from the wrath of the Scots. Intimidated by the frowning brows, and nervous arms of all around, he held his peace, and the doors were shut on him.

Wallace foresaw the heavy tempest to Scotland threatened by these repeated embassies. He perceived that Edward, by sending overtures, which he knew could not be accepted; by making a show of pacific intentions; meant to throw the blame of the continuation of hostilities upon the Scots; and so overcome the reluctance of his more equitable nobility, to further persecute a people whom he had made suffer so unjustly. The same insidious policy was likewise meant to change the aspect of the Scottish cause in the eyes of Philip of France; who had lately sent congratulations to the Regent, on the victory of Cambus-Kenneth; and by that means, deprive him of a powerful ally, and zealous negotiator for an honourable peace.

To prevent this last injury, Wallace despatched a quick-sailing vessel with Sir Alexander Ramsay, to inform King Philip of the particulars of Edward's proposals, and of the consequent continued warfare.

On the twenty-eighth of February, Sir William Wallace joined Lord Andrew Murray on Bothwell moor; where he had the happiness of seeing his brave friend again lord of the domains he had so lately lost in the Scottish cause. Wallace did not visit the castle. At such a crisis, he forbore to unnerve his mind, by awakening the griefs which lay slumbering at the bottom of his heart. Halbert came from his convent, once more to look upon the face of his beloved master. The meeting cost Wallace many agonising pangs; but he smiled on his faithful servant. He pressed the venerable form in his manly arms, and promised him news of his life and safety. 'May I die,' cried the old man, 'ere I hear it is otherwise! But youth is no warrant for life; the vigour of those arms, cannot always assure themselves of victory; and should you fall, where would be our country?'

'With a better than I;' returned the chief; 'in the arms of God. He will fight for Scotland, when Wallace is laid low.' Halbert wept. But the trumpet sounded for the field. He blessed his lord, and they parted for ever.

A strong force from the Highlands, joined the troops from Stirling; and Wallace had the satisfaction of seeing before him, thirty thousand well-appointed men, eager for the fight. With all Scotland pressing on his heart, his eye lingered a moment on the distant towers of Bothwell; but not delaying a moment, he placed himself at the head of his legions, and set forth through a country, now budding with all the charms of the cultivation he had spread over it. In the midst of a fine glen of renovated corn-fields, he was met by a courier from Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, with information—that the Northumbrians, being apprised of King Edward's approach, were assembling in immense bodies; and having crossed the Debatable land in the night, had driven Sir Eustace Maxwell, with great loss, into Carlaveroch; and, though harassed by Kirkpatrick himself, were ravaging the country as far as Dumfries. The letter of the brave knight added, 'These Southron thieves blow the name of Edward before them, and with its sound have spell-bound the courage of every soul I meet. Come, then, valiant Wallace, and conjure it down again; else, I shall not be surprised if the men of Annandale bind me hand and foot, and deliver me up to Algernon Percy (the leader of this inroad) to purchase mercy to their cowardice.'

Wallace made no reply to this message; but proclaiming to his men that the enemy were in Dumfriesshire, every foot was put to the speed; and in a short time they arrived on the ridgy summits of the eastern mountains of Clydesdale. His troops halted for rest near the village of Biggar; and it being night, he ascended to the top of the highest craig, and lit a fire, whose far-streaming light he hoped would send the news of his approach to Annandale. The air being calm and clear, the signal rose in such a long pyramid of flame, that distant shouts of rejoicing were heard breaking the deep silence of the hour. A moment after, a hundred answering beacons burnt along the horizon. Torthorald saw the propitious blaze; he

showed it to his terrified followers;—'Behold that *hill of fire!*' cried he, 'and cease to despair.'—'Wallace comes!' was their response; 'and *we will do, or die!*'[1]

Day broke upon Wallace, as he crossed the heights of Drumlanrig; and pouring his thousands over the almost deserted valleys of Annandale, like a torrent he swept the invaders back upon their steps. He took young Percy prisoner; and leaving him shut up in Lochmaben, drove his flying vassals far beyond the borders.

Annandale again free, he went into its various quarters; and summoning the people, (who now crept from their caves and woods, to shelter under his shield,) he reproved them for their cowardice; and showed them, that unless every man possess a courage equal to his general, he must expect to fall under the yoke of the enemy. 'Faith in a leader is good,' said he; 'but not such a faith as leaves him to act, without yourselves rendering that assistance to your own preservation, which Heaven itself commands. When absent from you in person, I left my spirit with you, in the brave knights of Carlaveroch and Torthorald; and yet you fled. Had I been here, and you done the same, the like must have been the consequence. What think you is in my arm, that I should alone stem your enemies? The expectation is extravagant, and false. I am but the head of the battle, you are the arms; if you shrink, I fall, and the cause is ruined. You follow my call to the field, you fight valiantly, and I win the day! Respect then yourselves; and believe, that you are the sinews, the nerves, the strength of Sir William Wallace!'

Some looked manfully up, at this exhortation; but most hung their heads in remembered shame, while he

[1] The mountain from which this beacon sent its rays, has from that hour been called *Tinto* or *Tintoc* (which signifies *The Hill of Fire;*) and is yet regarded by the country people with a devotion almost idolatrous. Its height is about 2260 feet from the sea. Not far from *Tinto*, at Biggar the spot is shown which was Wallace's camp. These last animating words are a rallying cry in the fine old song of 'Ye Scots wha' ha' wi' Wallace bled!'—(1809.)

continued:— 'Dishonour not your fathers, and your trust in God, by relying on any one human arm; or doubting that, from heaven! Be confident, that while the standard of true liberty is before you, you fight under God's banner. See how I, in that faith, drove these conquering Northumbrians before me like frighted roes! You might, and must do the same, or the sword of Wallace is drawn in vain. Partake my spirit, brethren of Annandale; fight as stoutly over my grave, as by my side; or, before the year expires, you will again be the slaves of Edward.'

Such language, while it covered the fugitives with confusion of face, awoke emulation in all, to efface with honourable deeds the memory of their disgrace. With augmented forces he therefore marched into Cumberland; and having drawn up his array between a river, and a high ground which he covered with archers, he stood prepared to meet the approach of King Edward.

But Edward did not appear till late in the next day; and then the Scots descried his legions, advancing from the horizon, to pitch their vanguard on the plain of Stanmore. Wallace knew that for the first time he was now going to pit his soldiership against that of the greatest general in Christendom. But de did not shrink from measuring him arm to arm, and mind to mind; for the assurance of his cause was in both.

His present aim was to draw the English towards the Scottish lines, where, at certain distances, he had dug deep pits; and having covered them lightly with twigs and loose grass, left them as traps for the Southron cavalry: for in cavalry, he was told by his spies, would consist the chief strength of Edward's army. The waste in which Wallace had laid the adjoining counties, rendered the provisioning of so large a host difficult: and besides, as it was composed of a mixed multitude, from every land on which the King of England had set his invading foot, harmony could not be expected to continue amongst its leaders. Delay was therefore an advantage to the Scottish

Regent; and observing that his enemy held back, as if he wished to draw him from his position; he determined not to stir, although he might seem to be struck with awe of so great an adversary.

To this end he offered him peace; hoping either to obtain what he asked (which he did not deem probable,) or, by filling Edward with an idea of his fear, urge him to precipitate himself forward; to avoid the dangers of a prolonged sojourn in so barren a country, and to take Wallace, as he might think, in his panic. Instructing his heralds what to say, he sent them on to Roycross, near which the tent of the King of England was pitched. Supposing that his enemy was now at his feet, and ready to beg the terms he had before rejected, Edward admitted the ambassadors, and bade them deliver their message. Without further parley, the herald spoke.

'Thus saith Sir William Wallace. Were it not that the kings and nobles of the realm of Scotland, have ever asked redress of injuries, before they sought revenge, you, King of England, and invader of our country! should not now behold orators in your camp, persuading concord; but an army in battle array, advancing to the onset. Our Lord Regent being of the ancient opinion of his renowned predecessors, that the greatest victories are never of such advantage to a conqueror, as an honourable and bloodless peace, sends to offer this peace to you, at the price of restitution. The lives you have rifled from us, you cannot restore; but the noble Lord Douglas, whom you now unjustly detain a prisoner, we demand; and that you retract those claims on our monarchy, which never had existence, till ambition begot them on the basest treachery. Grant these just requisitions, and we lay down our arms; but continue to deny them, and our nation is ready to rise to a man, and with heart and hand avenge the injuries we have sustained. You have wasted our lands, burnt our towns, and imprisoned our nobility. Without consideration of age or condition, women,

children, and feeble old men, have, unresisting, fallen by your sword. And why was all this? Did our confidence in your honour offend you, that you put our chieftains in durance, and deprived our yeomanry of their lives? Did the benedictions with which our prelates hailed you, as the arbitrator between our princes, raise your ire, that you burnt their churches, and slew them on the altars?—These, O King! were thy deeds; and for these, William Wallace is in arms. But yield us the peace we ask; withdraw from our quarters; relinquish your unjust pretensions; and we shall once more consider Edward of England, as the kinsman of Alexander the Third; and his subjects, the friends, and allies of our realm.'

Not in the least moved by this address, Edward contemptuously answered, 'Intoxicated by a transitory success, your leader is vain enough to suppose that he can discomfit the King of England, as he has done his unworthy officers—by fierce and insolent words! but we are not so weak as to be overthrown by a breath, nor so base as to bear argument from a rebel. I come to claim my own; to assert my supremacy over Scotland!—and it shall acknowledge its liege lord, or be left a desert; without a living creature, to say "This was a kingdom." Depart; this is my answer to you; your leader shall receive his, at the point of my lance.'

Wallace, who did not expect a more favourable reply, ere his ambassadors returned had marshalled his lines for the onset. Lord Bothwell, with Murray his valiant son, took the lead on the left wing; Sir Eustace Maxwell, and Kirkpatrick, commanded on the right. Graham (in whose quick observation, and promptitude to bring it to effect, Wallace placed the first confidence) held the reserve behind the woods; and the Regent himself, with Edwin and his brave standard-bearer, occupied the centre. Having heard the report of his messengers, he repeated to his troops the answer they had brought: and while he stood at the head of the lines, he exhorted them

to remember, that on that day the eyes of all Scotland would be upon them. They were the first of their country, who had gone forth to meet the tyrant in a pitched battle; and in proportion to the danger they confronted, would be their meed of glory. 'But it is not for renown, merely, that you are called upon to fight this day,' said he; 'your rights, your homes are at stake. You have no hope of security for your lives, but in an unswerving determination to keep the field; and let the world see, how much more might lies in the arms of a few, contending for their country and hereditary liberties, than in hosts, which seek for blood and spoil. Slavery and freedom lie before you! Shrink but one backward step, and yourselves are in bondage, your wives become the prey of violence. Be firm: trust Him who blesses the righteous cause, and victory will crown your arms!'

Though affecting to despise his young opponent, Edward was too good a general, really to contemn an enemy who had so often proved himself worthy of respect; and therefore, by declaring his determination to put all the Scottish chieftains to death; and to transfer their estates to his conquering officers, he stimulated their avarice, as well as love of fame; and with every passion in arms, they rushed to the combat.

Wallace stood unmoved.—Not a bow was drawn, till the impetuous squadrons, in full charge towards the flanks of the Scots, fell into the pits: then it was that the Highland archers on the hill, launched their arrows: the plunging horses were instantly overwhelmed by others, who could not be checked in their career. New showers of darts rained upon them; and sticking into their flesh, made them rear, and roll upon their riders: while others, who were wounded, but had escaped the pits, flew back in rage of pain upon the advancing infantry. A confusion ensued, so perilous, that the King thought it necessary to precipitate himself forward; and in person attack the main body of his adversary, which yet stood inactive.

Giving the spur to his charger, he ordered his troops to press on over the struggling heaps before them; and being obeyed, with much difficulty and great loss, he passed the first range of pits: but a second and a wider, awaited him; and there, seeing his men sink into them by squadrons, he beheld the whole army of Wallace close in upon them. Terrific was now the havoc.—The very numbers of the Southrons, and the mixed discipline of their army, proved its bane. In the tumult, they hardly understood the orders which were given; and some mistaking them, acted so contrary to the intended movements, that Edward, galloping from one end of the field to the other, appeared like a frantic man, regardless of every personal danger, so that he could but fix others to front the same tempest of death with himself. His officers trembled at every step he took, for fear that some of the secret pits should ingulf him. However, the unshrinking courage of their monarch, rallied a part of the distracted army, which, with all the force of desperation, he drove against the centre of the Scots. But at this juncture, the reserve under Graham having turned the royal position, charged him in the rear; and the archers redoubling their discharge of artillery, the Flanderkins, who were in the van of Edward, suddenly giving way with cries of terror, the amazed King found himself obliged to retreat, or run the risk of being taken. He gave a signal; the first of the kind he had ever sounded in his life; and drawing his English troops around him, after much hard fighting fell back in tolerable order beyond the confines of his camp.

The Scots were eager to pursue him, but Wallace checked the motion: 'Let us not hunt the lion, till he stand at bay!' cried he. 'He will retire far enough from the Scottish borders, without our leaving this vantage ground to drive him.'

What Wallace said, came to pass. Soon no vestige of a Southron soldier, but the dead which strewed the

road, was to be seen from side to side of the wide horizon. The royal camp was immediately seized by the triumphant Scots; and the tent of King Edward, with its costly furniture, was sent to Stirling as a trophy of the victory.

CHAPTER XXXII

STIRLING AND SNAWDOUN

THE few chieftains who had remained on their estates during the suspense before the battle, from a belief that if the issue proved unfavourable they should be safest amongst their native glens, now came with numerous trains to greet the return of their victorious Regent. The ladies brought forth their most splendid apparel; and the houses of Stirling were hung with tapestry, to hail with due respect the benefactor of the land.

At last the hour arrived, when a messenger, whom Lord Mar had sent out for the purpose, returned on full speed with information, that the Regent was passing the Carron. At these tidings the animated old earl called out his retinue, mounted his coal-black steed, and ordered a sumptuous charger to be caparisoned with housings wrought in gold by the hands of Lady Mar and her ladies. The horse was intended to meet Wallace, and to bring him into the city. Edwin led it forward. In the rear of the Earls Mar and Badenoch, came all the chieftains of the country, in gallant array. Their ladies, on splendid palfreys, followed the superb car of the Countess of Mar; and, preceding the multitudes of Stirling, left the town a desert. Not a living being seemed now within its walls, excepting the Southron prisoners; who had assembled on the top of the citadel to view the return of their conqueror.

Helen remained in Snawdoun, believing that she was the only soul left in that vast palace. She sat musing on the extraordinary fate of Wallace; a few months ago, a despised outlaw, at this moment the idol of the nation! And then

turned to herself; the wooed of many a gallant heart; and now devoted to one, whom, like the sun, she must ever contemplate with admiration, while he should pass on above her sphere, unconscious of the devotion which filled her soul.

The distant murmur of the populace, thronging out of the streets towards the Carse, gradually subsided; and at last she was left in profound silence. 'He must be near,' thought she; 'he whose smile is more precious to me than the adulation of all the world besides, now smiles upon every one! All look upon him, all hear him, but I—and I—Ah, Wallace, did Marion love thee dearer?' As her devoted heart demanded this question, her tender and delicate soul shrunk within herself, and deeply blushing, she hid her face in her hands. A pause of a few minutes;—and a sound as if the skies were rent, tore the air; a noise like the distant roar of the sea succeeded; and soon after, the shouts of an approaching multitude shook the palace to its foundations. Helen started on her feet; the tumult of voices augmented; the sound of coming squadrons thundered over the ground. At this instant every bell in the city began its peals; and the door of Helen's room suddenly opened—Lady Ruthven hurried in. 'Helen,' cried she, 'I would not disturb you before; but as you were to be absent, I would not make one in Lady Mar's train; and I come to enjoy with you the return of our beloved Regent.'

Helen did not speak; but her eloquent countenance amply told her aunt what were the emotions of her heart; and Lady Ruthven taking her hand, attempted to draw her towards an oriel window which opened to a view of the High Street; but Helen, shrinking from the movement, begged to be excused. 'I hear enough,' said she, 'my dear aunt; sights like these overcome me; let me remain where I am.'

Lady Ruthven was going to remonstrate, when the loud huzzas of the people and soldiers, accompanied by acclamations of 'Long live victorious Wallace, our Prince and King!' struck Helen back into her seat, and Lady Ruthven

darting towards the window, cried aloud, 'He comes, Helen, he comes! His bonnet off his noble brow. Oh! how princely does he look!—and now he bows. Ah, they shower flowers upon him from the houses on each side of the street; how sweetly he smiles, and bows to the ladies, as they lean from their windows! Come, Helen, come, if you would see the perfection of majesty and modesty united in one!'

Helen did not move; but Lady Ruthven stretching out her arm, in a moment had drawn her within view of Wallace. She saw him attended as a conqueror and a king; but with the eyes of a benefactor and a brother he looked on all around. The very memory of war seemed to vanish before his presence, for all there was love and gentleness.

Far different were the emotions which agitated the bosoms of every person present at the entry of Sir William Wallace. All but himself regarded it as the triumph of the King of Scotland. And, while some of the nobles exulted in their future monarch; the major part felt the demon of envy so possess their souls, that they who, before his arrival, were ready to worship his name, now looked on the empire to which he seemed borne on the hearts of the people, with a rancorous jealousy; which from that moment vowed his humiliation, or the fall of Scotland. The very tongues which, in the general acclaim, called loudest, 'Long live our King!' belonged to those who, in the secret recesses of their souls, swore to work his ruin, and to make these full-blown honours the means of his destruction. He had in vain tried to check, what his moderate desires deemed the extravagant gratitude of the people; but finding his efforts only excited still louder demonstrations of their love, and knowing himself immovable in his resolution to remain a subject of the crown, he rode on composedly towards the citadel.

Those ladies who had not retired from the cavalcade, to hail their Regent a second time from their windows, preceded him in Lady Mar's train to the hall; where she had caused a sumptuous feast to be spread to greet his arrival.

Two seats were placed under a canopy of cloth of gold, at the head of the board. The Countess stood there, in all the splendour of her ideal rank; and would have seated Wallace in the royal chair on her right hand, but he drew back;—'I am only a guest in this citadel,' returned he; 'and it would ill become me to take place of the master of the banquet.' As he spoke, he looked on Lord Mar; who, understanding the language of his eyes, which never said the thing he would not, without a word took the kingly seat; and so disappointed the Countess. By this refusal, she still found herself as no more than the governor of Stirling's wife; when she had hoped a compliance with her cunning arrangement, would have hinted to all, that she was to be the future queen of their acknowledged sovereign. They who knew Wallace, saw his unshaken resolution in this apparently slight action: but others who read his design, in their own ambition, translated it differently; and deemed it only an artful rejection of the appendages of royalty, to excite the impatience of the people to crown him in reality.

As the ladies took their seats at the board, Edwin, who stood by the chair of his beloved lord, whispered, 'Our Helen is not here.'

Lady Mar overheard the name of Helen, but she could not distinguish Wallace's reply; and fearing that some second assignation, of more happy termination than that of the chapel might be designed, she determined that if Edwin were to be the bearer of a secret correspondence between the man she loved, and the daughter she hated, to deprive them speedily of so ready an assistant.

In the collected council the following day, the Earl of March made his treacherous request; and Wallace, trusting his vehement oaths of fidelity (because he thought the versatile earl had now discovered his true interest), granted him charge of the Lothians. The Lords Athol and Buchan were not backward in offering their services to the Regent; and the rest of the discontented nobles, following

the base example, with equal deceit bade him command their lives and fortunes. While asseverations of loyalty filled the walls of the council-hall; and the lauding rejoicings of the people still sounded from without; all spoke of security and confidence to Wallace; and never, perhaps, did he think himself so absolute in the heart of Scotland, as at the very moment when three-fourths of its nobility were plotting his destruction.

Lord Loch-awe knew his own influence in the minds of the bravest chieftains. From the extent of his territories, and his tried valour, he might well have assumed the title of his great ancestor, and been called King of Woody Morven; but he was content with a patriarch's sway over so many valiant clans; and previous to the Regent's appearance in the council-hall, he opened his intentions to the assembled lords. Some assented with real satisfaction; the rest readily acquiesced, in what they had laid so sure a plan to circumvent.

Wallace soon after entered. Loch-awe rising, stood forth before him; and in a long and persuasive speech, once more declared the wishes of the nation, that he would strike the decisive blow on the pretensions of Edward, by himself accepting the crown. The Bishop of Dunkeld, with all the eloquence of learning, and the most animated devotion to the interest of Scotland, seconded the petition. Mar and Bothwell enforced it. The disaffected lords thought proper to throw in their conjurations also; and every voice, but that of Badenoch, poured forth fervent entreaties, that he, their liberator, would grant the supplication of the nation.

Wallace rose, and every tongue was mute:—'My gratitude to Scotland increases with my life; but my answer must still be the same—I cannot be its king.'

At these words the venerable Loch-awe threw himself on his knees before him:—'In my person,' cried he, 'see Scotland at your feet! still bleeding with the effects of former struggles for empire, she would throw off all claims but those of virtue, and receive as her anointed sovereign, her

father and deliverer! She has no more arguments to utter: these are her prayers; and thus I offer them.'

'Kneel not to me, brave Loch-awe!' cried Wallace; 'nor believe the might of these victories, lies so thoroughly in this arm, that I dare outrage its Maker. Were I to comply with your wishes, I should disobey Him who has hitherto made me His happy agent; and how could I guard my kingdom from His vengeance? Your rightful king yet lives; he is an alien from his country, but Heaven may return him to your prayers. Meanwhile, as his representative, as your soldier and protector, I shall be blest in wearing out my life. My ancestors were ever faithful to the blood of Alexander, and in the same fidelity I will die.'

The firmness with which he spoke, and the determined expression of his noble countenance, convinced Loch-awe that he was not to be shaken; and rising from his knee, he bowed in silence. March whispered to Buchan, 'Behold the hypocrite! But we shall unmask him. He thinks to blind us to his towering ambition, by this affected moderation. He will not be called a king; because, with our crown, certain limitations are laid on the prerogative; but he will be our Regent, that he may be our dictator; and every day demand gratitude for voluntary services, which, performed as a king, could only be considered as his duty!'

When the council broke up, these sentiments were actively disseminated amongst the disaffected throng; and each gloomy recess in the woods murmured with seditious meetings. But every lip in the country at large, breathed the name of Wallace, as they would have done a god's; while the land that he had blessed, bloomed on every hill and valley like a garden.

Stirling now exhibited a constant carnival; peace was in every heart, and joy its companion. As Wallace had commanded in the field, he decided in the judgment-hall; and while all his behests were obeyed with a promptitude, which kept the machine of state constantly moving in the most beautiful order, his bitterest enemies could not but

secretly acknowledge the perfection they were determined to destroy.

His munificent hand stretched itself far and near, that all who had shared the sufferings of Scotland might drink largely of her prosperity. The good abbot of Scone was invited from his hermitage; and when he heard from the ambassadors sent to him, that the brave young warrior whom he had entertained, was the resistless Wallace, he no longer thought of the distant and supine Bruce, but centred every wish for his country in the authority of her deliverer. A few days brought him to Stirling; and wishing to remain near the most constant residence of his noble friend, he requested that, instead of being restored to Scone, he might be installed in the vacant monastery of Cambus-Kenneth. Wallace gladly acquiesced; and the venerable abbot being told that his late charge, the Lady Helen, was in the palace, went to visit her; and as he communicated his exultation and happiness, she rejoiced in the benedictions which his grateful spirit invoked on the head of her almost worshipped sovereign. Her heart gave him this title; which she believed, the not to be repressed affection of the people would at last force him to accept.

The wives and families of the Lanark veterans were brought from Loch Doine, and again planted in their native valleys; thus nought in the kingdom appeared different from its most prosperous days, but the widowed heart of the dispenser of all this good. And yet, so fully did he engage himself in the creation of these benefits, that no time seemed left to him for regrets; but they haunted him like persecuting spirits, invisible to all but himself.

During the performance of these things, the Countess of Mar, though apparently lost to all other pursuits than the peaceful enjoyment of her reflected dignities, was absorbed in the one great object of her passion. Eager to be rid of so dangerous a spy, and adversary, as she deemed Edwin to be, she was labouring day and night to effect by clandestine

schemes, his banishment, when an unforeseen circumstance carried him far away. Lord Ruthven, while on an embassy to the Hebrides, fell ill. As his disorder was attended with extreme danger, he sent for his wife; and Edwin, impelled by love for his father, and anxiety to soothe the terrified suspense of his mother, readily left the side of his friend, to accompany her to the isles. Lady Mar had now no scrutinising eye to fear; her nephew Murray was still on duty in Clydesdale; the Earl her husband trusted her too implicitly, even to turn on her a suspicious look; and Helen, she contrived, should be as little in her presence as possible.

Busy, then, as this lady was, the enemies of the Regent were not less active in the prosecution of their plans. The Earl of March had arrived at Dunbar; and having despatched his treasonable proposals to Edward, had received letters from that monarch by sea; accepting his services, and promising every reward that could satisfy his ambition, and the cupidity of those whom he could draw over to his cause. The wary King then told the Earl, that if he would send his wife and family to London, as hostages for his faith, he was ready to bring a mighty army to Dunbar; and, by that gate, once more enter Scotland. These negotiations backwards and forwards from London to Dunbar, and from Dunbar to the treacherous lords at Stirling, occupied much time; and the more, as great precaution was necessary to escape the vigilant eyes of Wallace, which seemed to be present in every part of the kingdom at once. So careful was he, in overlooking, by his well chosen officers, civil and military, every transaction, that the slightest dereliction from the straight order of things was immediately seen and examined into. Many of these trusty magistrates having been placed in the Lothians, before March took the government, he could not now remove them without exciting suspicion; and therefore, as they remained, great circumspection was used to elude their watchfulness.

From the time that Edward had again entered into terms with the Scottish chiefs, Lord March sent regular tidings to Lord Soulis of the progress of their negotiation. He knew that nobleman would gladly welcome the recall of the King of England; for ever since the revolution in favour of Scotland, he had remained obstinately shut up within his castle of Hermitage. Chagrin at having lost Helen, was not the least of his mortifications; and the wounds he had received from the invisible hand which had released her, having been given with all the might of the valiant arm which directed the blow, were not even now healed; his passions kept them still inflamed; and their smart made his vengeance burn the fiercer against Wallace, who he now learnt was the mysterious agent of her rescue.

While treason secretly prepared to spring its mine beneath the feet of the Regent, he, unsuspicious that any could be discontented, where all were free and prosperous, thought of no enemy to the tranquil fulfilment of his duties, but the minor persecutions of Lady Mar. No day escaped without bringing him letters, either to invite him to Snawdoun, or to lead her to the citadel, where he resided. In every one of these epistles, she declared that it was no longer the wildness of passion, which impelled her to seek his society, but the moderated regard of a friend. And though perfectly aware of all that was behind these asseverations, (for she had deceived him once into a belief of this plea, and had made him feel its falseness,) he found himself forced at times, out of the civility due to her sex, to comply with her invitations. Indeed her conduct never gave him reason to hold her in any higher respect; for whenever they happened to be left alone, her behaviour exhibited anything but the chaste affection to which she made pretensions. The frequency of these scenes, at last made him never go to Snawdoun unaccompanied; (for she rarely allowed him to have even a glimpse of Helen;) and by this precaution he avoided much of her solicitations. But,

strange to say, even at the time that this conduct, by driving her to despair, might have excited her to some desperate act, her wayward heart threw the blame of his coldness upon her trammels with Lord Mar; and flattering herself, that were he dead, all would happen as she wished, she panted for that hour with an impatience which often tempted her to precipitate the event.

Things were in this situation, when Wallace, one night, received a hasty summons from his pillow by a page of Lord Mar's, requesting him to immediately repair to his chamber. Concluding that something alarming must have happened, he threw on his brigandine and plaid, and entered the apartments of the governor. Mar met him with a countenance, the herald of a dreadful matter. 'What has happened?' inquired Wallace.—'Treason,' answered Mar; 'but from what point, I cannot guess. My daughter has braved a dark and lonely walk from Snawdoun, to bring the proofs.' While speaking, he led the chief into the room where Helen sat, like some fair spectre of the night; her long hair, disordered by the winds of a nocturnal storm, mingling with the grey folds of the mantle which enveloped her. Wallace hastened forward—she now no longer flitted away, scared from his approach by the frowning glances of her stepmother. He had once attempted to express his grateful regrets for what she had suffered in her lovely person for his sake, but the Countess had then interrupted him, and Helen disappeared. Now he beheld her in a presence, where he could declare all his gratitude, without subjecting its gentle object to one harsh word in consequence; and almost forgetting his errand to the governor, and the tidings he had just heard, he remembered only the manner in which she had shielded his life with her arms; and he bent his knee respectfully before her, as she rose to his approach. Blushing, and silent, she extended her hand to him to rise. He pressed it warmly,—'Sweet excellence!' said he, 'I am happy in this opportunity, however gained, to again pour out my acknowledgments to you: and though

I have been denied that pleasure until now, yet the memory of your generous interest in the friend of your father, is one of the most cherished sentiments of my heart.'

'It is my happiness, as well as my duty, Sir William Wallace,' replied she, 'to regard you and my country as one: and that, I hope, will excuse the, perhaps, rash action of this night.' As she spoke, he rose, and looked at Lord Mar for explanation.

The Earl held a roll of vellum towards him. 'This writing,' said he, 'was found this evening, by my daughter. She was enjoying with my wife, and other ladies, a moonlight walk on the shores of the Forth behind the palace; when having strayed at some distance from her friends, she saw this packet, lying in the path before her as if it had been just dropt. It bore no direction, she therefore opened it; and part of the contents soon told her she must conceal the whole, till she could reveal them to me. Not even to my wife, did she intrust the dangerous secret; nor would she run any risk, by sending it by a messenger. As soon as the family were gone to rest, she wrapped herself in her plaid; and finding a passage through one of the low embrasures of Snawdoun, with a fleet step made her way to the citadel, and to me. She gave me the packet. Read it, my friend, and judge if we do not owe ourselves to Heaven, for so critical a discovery.'

Wallace took the scroll, and read as follows:—

'Our trusty fellows will bring you this, and deliver copies of the same to the rest. We shall be with you in four-and-twenty hours after it arrives. The army of our liege lord is now in the Lothians; passing through them under the appellation of succours for the Regent from the Hebrides! Keep all safe, and neither himself nor any of his adherents, shall have a head on their shoulders by this day week.'

Neither superscription, name, nor date, was to this letter; but Wallace immediately knew the handwriting to be that of Lord March. 'Then, we must have traitors,

even within these walls!' exclaimed Mar; 'none but the most powerful chiefs, would the proud Cospatrick admit into his conspiracies. And what are we to do? for by to-morrow's evening, the army, this traitor has let into the heart of the country, will be at our gates!'

'No,' cried Wallace, 'thanks to God, and this guardian angel!' fervently clasping Helen's hand as he spoke, 'we must not be intimidated by treachery! Let us but be faithful to ourselves, my veteran friend, and all will go well. It matters not who the other traitors are; they must soon discover themselves, and shall find us prepared to counteract their machinations. Sound your bugles, my lord, to summon the heads of our council.'

At this command, Helen arose; but replaced herself in her chair, on Wallace exclaiming, 'Stay, Lady Helen; let the sight of such virgin delicacy, braving the terrors of the night, to warn betrayed Scotland, nerve every heart with redoubled courage to breast this insidious foe!' Helen did indeed feel her soul awake to all its ancient patriotic enthusiasm; and thus, with a countenance, pale, but resplendent with the light of her thoughts, she sat the angel of her heroic inspiration. Wallace often turned to look on her; while her eyes, unconscious of the adoring admiration which spoke in their beams, followed his god-like figure, as it moved through the room with a step that declared the undisturbed determination of his soul.

The Lords Bothwell, Loch-awe, and Badenoch, were the first that obeyed the call. They started at sight of Helen; but Wallace in a few words related the cause of her appearance; and the portentous letter was laid before them. All were acquainted with the handwriting of Lord March; and all agreed in attributing, to its real motive, his late solicitude to obtain the command of the Lothians; 'What!' cried Bothwell, 'but to open his castle-gates to the enemy!'

'And to repel him, before he reaches ours, my brave chiefs,' replied Wallace, 'I have summoned you! Edward

will not make this attempt, without tremendous powers. He knows what he risks; his men, his life, and his honour. We must therefore expect a resolution in him, adequate to such an enterprise. Lose not then a moment; even to-night, this instant, go out, and bring in your followers! I will call up mine from the banks of the Clyde, and be ready to meet him, ere he crosses the Carron.'

While he gave these orders, other nobles thronged in; and Helen, being severally thanked by them all, became so agitated, that stretching out her hand to Wallace, who was nearest to her, she softly whispered, 'Take me hence.' He read, in her blushing face, the oppression her modesty sustained in such a scene; and with faltering steps she leaned upon his arm, as he conducted her to an interior chamber. Overcome by her former fears, and the emotions of the last hour, she sunk into a chair, and burst into tears. Wallace stood near her; and as he looked on her, he thought, 'If aught on earth ever resembled the beloved of my soul, it is Helen Mar!' And all the tenderness which memory gave to his almost adored wife, and all the grateful complacency with which he regarded Helen, beamed at once from his eyes. She raised her head,—she felt that look,—it thrilled to her soul. For a moment, every former thought seemed lost in the one perception, that he then gazed on her as he had never looked on any woman since his Marion. Was she then beloved?

The impression was evanescent: 'No, no!' said she to herself; and waving her hand gently to him, with her head bent down; 'Leave me, Sir William Wallace.—Forgive me —but I am exhausted; my frame is weaker than my mind.' She spoke this at intervals; and Wallace respectfully touching the hand she extended, pressed it to his breast. 'I obey you, dear Lady Helen; and when next we meet, it will, I hope, be to dispel every fear in that gentle bosom.' She bowed her head without looking up; and Wallace left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FALKIRK

Before the sun rose, every brave Scot, within a few hours' march of Stirling, was on the Carse; and Lord Andrew Murray, with his veteran Clydesdale men, were already resting on their arms in view of the city walls. The messengers of Wallace had hastened with the speed of the winds, east and west; and the noon of the day saw him at the head of 30,000 men, determined to fight or to die for their country.

When the conspiring lords appeared on the Carse, and Mar communicated to them the lately discovered treason, they so well affected surprise at the contents of the scroll, that Wallace might not have suspected their connection with it, had not Lord Athol declared it altogether a forgery of some wanton persons; and then added with bitterness, 'to gather an army on such authority is ridiculous.' While he spoke, Wallace regarded him with a look which pierced him to the centre; and the blood rushing into his guilty heart, for once in his life he trembled before the eye of man. 'Whoever be the degenerate Scot, to whom this writing is addressed,' said Wallace, 'his baseness cannot betray us further. The troops of Scotland are ready to meet the enemy: and woe to the man who that day deserts his country!'—'Amen!' cried Lord Mar.—'Amen!' sounded from every lip: for when the conscience embraces treason against its earthly rulers, allegiance to its heavenly King, is abandoned with ease;—and the words, and oaths of the traitor, are equally unstable.

Badenoch's eye followed that of Wallace, and his suspicions fixed where the Regent's fell. For the honour of his blood, he forbore to accuse the Earl; but, for the same reason, he determined to watch his proceedings. However, the hypocrisy of Athol baffled even the penetration of his brother; and on his retiring from the ground, to call forth

his men for the expedition, in an affected chafe he complained to Badenoch of the stigma cast upon their house by the Regent's implied charge. 'But,' said he, 'he shall see the honour of the Cummin, emblazoned in blood on the sands of the Forth! His towering pride heeds not where it strikes; and this comes of raising men of low estate, to rule over princes!'—'His birth is noble, if not royal,' replied Badenoch; 'and before this, the posterity of kings have not disdained to recover their rights, by the sword of a brave subject.'—'True,' answered Athol; 'but is it customary for princes to allow that subject to sit on their throne? It is nonsense to talk of Wallace having refused a coronation. He laughs at the name; but see you not that he openly affects supreme power; that he rules the nobles of the land, like a despot? His word, his nod is sufficient!—*Go here, go there!*—as if he were absolute, and there was no voice in Scotland but his own! Look at the brave Mack Callan-more, the lord of the west of Scotland from sea to sea; he stands unbonneted before this mighty Wallace, with a more abject homage than ever he paid to the house of Alexander! Can you behold this, Lord Badenoch, and not find the royal blood of your descent, boil in your veins? Does not every look of your wife, the sister of a king, and your own right stamped upon your soul, reproach you? He is greater, by your strength. Humble him, my brother; be faithful to Scotland, but humble its proud dictator!'

Lord Badenoch replied to this rough exhortation, with the tranquillity belonging to his nature:—'I see not the least foundations for any of your charges against Sir William Wallace. He has delivered Scotland, and the people are grateful. The nation with one voice made him their Regent; and he fulfils the duties of his office:—but with a modesty, Lord Athol, which, I must affirm, I never saw equalled. I dissent from you, in all that you have said:—and, I confess, I did fear the blandishing arguments of the faithless Cospatrick, had persuaded you to embrace his pernicious treason. You deny it:—that is well.

Prove your innocence, at this juncture, in the field against Scotland's enemies; and John of Badenoch will then see no impending cloud, to darken the honour of the name of Cummin!'

The brothers immediately separated; and Athol, calling his cousin Buchan, arranged a new device, to counteract the vigilance of the Regent. One of their means, was to baffle his measures, by stimulating the less treasonable, but yet discontented chiefs, to thwart him in every motion. At the head of this last class, was John Stewart, Earl of Bute. During the whole of the preceding year he had been in Norway; and the first object he met on his return to Scotland, was the triumphal entry of Wallace into Stirling. Aware of the consequence Stewart's name would attach to any cause, Athol had gained his ear before he was introduced to the Regent; and then so poisoned his mind against Wallace, that all that was well in him, he deemed ill; and ever spoke of his bravery, with coldness; and of his patriotism, with disgust. He believed him a hypocrite; and, as such, despised and abhorred him.

While Athol marshalled his rebellious ranks; some to follow his broad treason in the face of day; and others to lurk behind, and delude the intrusted council left in Stirling; Wallace led forth his loyal chiefs, to take their stations at the heads of their different clans. Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, with the proudest expectations for Scotland, unfurled his golden standard to the sun. The Lords Loch-awe and Bothwell, with others, rode on the right of the Regent. Lord Andrew Murray, with the brave Sir John Graham, and a bevy of young knights, kept the ground on his left. Wallace looked around: Edwin was far away; and he felt but half appointed, when wanting his youthful sword-bearer. That faithful friend, did not even know of the threatened hostility; for, to have intimated to Lord Ruthven, a danger he could not assist to repel, would have inflamed his disorder by anxiety, and perhaps hurried him to dissolution.

As the Regent moved forward, with these private affections checkering his public cares, his heralds blew the trumpets of his approach; and a hundred embattled clans appeared in the midst of the plain, awaiting their valiant leaders. Each chief advanced to the head of his line, and stood, to hear the charge of Wallace.

'Brave Scots!' cried he, 'Treachery has admitted the enemy, whom resolute Patriotism had driven from our borders. Be steady in your fidelity to Scotland; and He who hath hitherto protected the just cause, will nerve your arms, to lay invasion, and its base coadjutors, again in the dust!'

The cheers of anticipated victory, burst from the soldiers, mingled with the clangour of their striking shields, at the inspiring voice of their leader. Wallace waved his truncheon (round which the plan of his array was wrapped,) to the chiefs, to fall back towards their legions; and while some appeared to linger, Athol, armed cap-a-pie, and spurring his roak into the area before the Regent, demanded in a haughty tone, 'Which of the chiefs, now in the field, is to lead the vanguard?'

'The Regent of Scotland,' replied Wallace, for once asserting the majesty of his station; 'and you, Lord Athol, with the Lord Buchan, are to defend your country, under the command of the brave head of your house, the princely Badenoch.'

'I stir not from this spot,' returned Athol, fiercely striking his lance into its rest, 'till I see the honour of my country, established in the eyes of the world, by a leader worthy of her rank, being placed in her vanguard.'

'What he says,' cried Buchan, 'I second.'—'And in the same spirit, chieftain of Ellerslie,' exclaimed Lord Bute, 'do I offer to Scotland, myself and my people. Another must lead the van, or I retire from her standard.'

'Speak on!' cried Wallace, more surprised than confounded, by this extraordinary attack.

'What these illustrious chiefs have uttered, is the voice of us all!' was the general exclamation from a band of warriors, who now thronged around the incendiary nobles.

'Your reign is over, proud chieftain!' rejoined Athol; 'the Scottish ranks are no longer to be cajoled by your affected moderation. We see the tyrant in your insidious smile, we feel him in the despotism of your decrees. To be thus ridden by a man of vulgar blood; to present him as the head of our nation, to the King of England, is beneath the dignity of our country; is an insult to our nobles; and therefore in the power of her consequence, I speak; and again demand of you, to yield the vanguard to one more worthy of the station. Before God and St. Magdalen, I swear,' added he, holding up his sword to the heavens, 'I will not stir an inch this day towards the enemy, unless a Cummin or a Stewart lead our army!'

'And is this your resolution, also, Lord Bute?' said Wallace, looking on Stewart. 'It is,' was the reply: 'a foe, like Edward, ought to be met as becomes a great and independent kingdom! We go in the array of an unanimous nation, to repel him; not as a band of insurgents, headed by a general, who, however brave, was yet drawn from the common ranks of the people. I therefore demand to follow a more illustrious leader to the field.'

'The eagles have long enough followed their owl in peacock's feathers,' cried Buchan; 'and being tired of the game, I, like the rest, soar upward again!'

'Resign that baton!' cried Athol: 'Give place to a more honourable leader!' repeated he, supposing that he had intimidated Wallace: but Wallace, raising the visor of his helmet, which he had closed on his last commands to his generals, looked on Athol with all the majesty of his truly royal soul in his eyes:—'Earl,' said he, 'the voices of the three estates of Scotland, declared me their Regent; and God ratified the election, by the victories

with which He crowned me. If in aught I have betrayed my trust, let the powers which raised me, be my accusers. Four pitched battles have I fought, and gained, for this country. Twice, I beat the representatives of King Edward, on the plains of Scotland; and a few months ago, I made him fly before me over the fields of Northumberland! What then has befallen me, that my arm is to be too short to meet this man? Has the oil of the Lord, with which the Saint of Dunkeld anointed my brows, lost its virtue, that I should shrink before any king in Christendom? I neither tremble at the name of Edward; nor will I so disgrace my own, (which never man who bore it, ever degraded, by swearing fealty to a foreign prince!) as to abandon, at such a crisis, the power with which Scotland has invested me. Whoever chooses to leave the cause of their country, let them go; and so manifest themselves of noble blood!—I remain; and I lead the vanguard!—Scotsmen, to your duty.'

As he spoke with a voice of unanswerable command, several chiefs fell back into their ranks. But some made a retrograde motion, towards the town. Lord Bute hardly knew what to think; so was he startled by the appeal of the accused Regent, and the noble frankness with which he maintained his rights. He stood frowning, as Wallace turned to him, and said, 'Do you, my Lord, adhere to these violent men? or am I to consider a chief, who, though hostile to me, was generous in his ire, still faithful to Scotland in spite of his prejudice against her leader? Will you fight her battles?'

'I shall never desert them,' replied Stewart: ''tis truth I seek; therefore be it to you, Wallace, this day, according to your conscience!' Wallace bowed his head, and presented him the truncheon, round which his line of battle was wrapped. On opening it he found that he was appointed to command the third division; Badenoch and Bothwell, to the first and second; and Wallace himself to the vanguard.

When the scouts arrived, they informed the Regent, that the English army had advanced near to the boundary of Linlithgow; and from the rapidity of their march, must be on the Carron the same evening. On this intelligence, Wallace put his troops to their speed; and before the sun had declined far towards the west, he was within view of Falkirk. But just as he had crossed the Carron, and the Southron banners appeared in sight, Lord Athol, at the head of his rebellious colleagues rode up to him. Stewart kept his appointed station; and Badenoch, doing the same, ashamed of his brother's disorder, called after him to keep his line. Regardless of all check, the obstinate chief galloped on; and extending his bold accomplices across the path of the Regent, demanded of him, on the penalty of his life, 'that moment to relinquish his pretensions to the vanguard.'

'I am not come here,' replied Wallace, indignantly, 'to betray my country! I know you, Lord Athol: and your conduct and mine, will this day prove who is most worthy the confidence of Scotland.'—'This day,' cried Athol, 'shall see you lay down the power you have usurped.'—'It shall see me maintain it to your confusion,' replied Wallace; 'and were you not surrounded by Scots, of too tried a worth for me to suspect their being influenced by your rebellious example, I would this moment make you feel the arm of justice. But the foe is in sight: do your duty now, sir earl; and for the sake of the house to which you belong, even this intemperate conduct shall be forgotten.' At this instant, Sir John Graham, hastening forward, exclaimed, 'The Southrons are bearing down upon us!' Athol glanced at their distant host, and turning on Wallace, with a sarcastic smile, 'My actions,' cried he, 'shall indeed decide the day!' and striking his spurs furiously into his horse, he rejoined Lord Badenoch's legion.

Edward did indeed advance in most terrible array. Above a hundred thousand men swelled his numerous ranks; and with these were united all from the Lothians

and Teviotdale, whom the influence of the faithless March, and the vindictive Soulis, could bring into the field. With this augmented host, and a determination to conquer or to die, the Southrons marched rapidly forward.

Wallace had drawn himself up on the ascent of the hill of Falkirk; and advantageously planted his archers, on a covering eminence flanked by the legions of Badenoch.—Lord Athol, who knew the integrity of his brother, and who cared not in so great a cause (for such his ambition termed it) how he removed an adversary from Edward, and a censor from himself, gave a ridding order to one of his emissaries. Accordingly, in the moment when the trumpet of Wallace sounded the charge, and the arrows from the hill darkened the air, the virtuous Badenoch was stabbed through the back, to the very heart. Athol had placed himself near, to watch his purpose; but in the instant the deed was done, he threw himself on the perpetrator, and wounding him in the same vital part, exclaimed, holding up his dagger, 'Behold the weapon that has slain the assassin, hired by Sir William Wallace! Thus it is, that his ambition would rob Scotland of her native princes. Let us fly from his steel, to the shield of a king and a hero.'

The men had seen their leader fall; they doubted not the words of his brother; and with a shout, exclaiming, 'Whither you lead, we follow!' all at once turned towards him. 'Seize the traitor's artillery!' At this command they mounted the hill; and the archers, little expecting an assault from their countrymen, were either instantly cut down, or hurried away prisoners by Athol and Buchan; who, now, at the head of the whole division of the Cummins, galloped towards the Southrons; and with loud cries of 'Long live King Edward!' threw themselves *en masse* into their arms. The squadrons which followed Stewart, not knowing but they might be hurried into similar desertion, hesitated in the charge he had commanded them to make; and, while thus undecisive, some

obeyed in broken ranks, and others lingered; the enemy advanced briskly up, surrounded the division, and on the first onset slew its leader.—His faithful Brandanes,[1] seeing their beloved commander trampled to the earth by an overwhelming foe, fell into confusion; and communicating their dismay to their comrades, the whole division sank under the shock of the Southrons, as if touched by a spell. Meanwhile, Bothwell and his legions, were fiercely engaged with the Earl of Lincoln, amid the swamps of a deep morass; but being involved by reciprocal impetuosity, equal peril ingulfed them both. The firm battalion of the vanguard, alone remaining unbroken, stood before the pressing and now victorious thousands of Edward without receding a step. The archers being lost by the treachery of the Cummins, all hope lay on the strength of the spear and sword; and Wallace, standing immovable as the rock of Stirling, saw rank after rank of his dauntless infantry mowed down by the Southron arrows; while fast as they fell, their comrades closed over them and still presented the same impenetrable front of steady valour, against the heavy charges of the enemy's horse. The King of England, indignant at this pause in his conquering onset, accompanied by his natural brother, the valiant Frere de Briagny, and a squadron of resolute knights, in fury threw themselves towards the Scottish pikemen. Wallace descried the jewelled crest of Edward, amidst the cloud of battle there, and rushing forward, hand to hand engaged the King. Edward knew his adversary not so much by his snow-white plume, as by the prowess of his arm. Twice did the heavy claymore of Wallace, strike fire from the steely helmet of the monarch; but at the third stroke, the glittering diadem fell in shivers to the ground, and the royal blood of Edward followed the blow. He reeled—and another stroke would have settled the freedom of Scotland for

[1] *Brandanes* was the distinguishing appellation of the military followers of the chiefs of Bute.

ever, had not the strong arm of Frere de Briagny passed between Wallace and the King. The combat thickened: blow followed blow; blood gushed at each fall of the sword; and the hacked armour, showed in every aperture a grisly wound. A hundred weapons seemed directed against the breast of the Regent of Scotland, when, raising his sword with a determined stroke, it cleft the visor and crest of De Briagny, who fell lifeless to the ground. The cry that issued from the Southron troops at this sight again nerved the vengeful Edward; and ordering the signal for his reserve to advance, he renewed the attack; and assaulting Wallace with all the fury of his heart in his eyes and arms; he tore the earth with the trampling of disappointed vengeance, when he found the invincible phalanx still stood firm. 'I will reach him yet!' cried he; and turning to De Valence, he commanded that the new artillery should be called into action. On this order, a blast of trumpets in the Southron army blew! and the answering war-wolves it had summoned, sent forth showers of red-hot stones into the midst of the Scottish battalions. At the same moment, the English reserve charging round the hill, attacked them in flank, and accomplished what the fiery torrent had begun. The field was heaped with dead; the brooks which flowed down the heights, ran with blood; but no confusion was there—no, not even in the mind of Wallace; though, with amazement and horror, he beheld the saltire of Annandale, the banner of Bruce, leading onward the last exterminating division! Scot now contended with Scot, brother with brother. Those valiant spirits, who had left their country twenty years before to accompany their chief to the Holy Land, now re-entered Scotland, to wound her in her vital part; to wrest from her her liberties; to make her mourn in ashes, that she had been the mother of such matricides. A horrid mingling of tartans with tartans, in the direful grasp of reciprocal death; a tremendous rushing of the flaming artillery, which swept the Scottish ranks like blasting lightning, for

a moment seemed to make the reason of their leader stagger. Arrows, winged with fire, flashed through the air; and sticking in men and beasts, drove them against each other in maddening pain. Twice was the horse of Wallace shot under him; and on every side were his closest friends wounded and dispersed. But his terrific horror at the scene, passed away in the moment of its perception; and though the Southron and the Bruce pressed on him in overwhelming numbers, his few remaining ranks obeyed his call; and with a presence of mind, and military skill that was exhaustless, he maintained the fight till darkness parted the combatants. When Edward gave command for his troops to rest till morning, Wallace, with the remnant of his faithful band, slowly recrossed the Carron; that they also might repose, till dawn should renew the conflict.

Lonely was the sound of his bugle, as sitting on a fragment of the druidical ruins of Dunipacis, he blew its melancholy blast to summon his chiefs around him.—Its penetrating voice pierced the hills; but no answering note came upon his ear:—a direful conviction seized upon his heart. But they might have fled far distant!—he blushed as the thought crossed him; and hopeless again, dropped the horn which he had raised to blow a second summons. At this instant he saw a shadow darken the moonlight ruins, and Scrymgeour, who had gladly heard his commander's bugle, hastened forward.

'What has been the fate of this dismal day?' asked Wallace, looking onward, as if he expected others to come up: 'Where are my friends?—Where Graham, Badenoch, and Bothwell?—Where all, brave Scrymgeour, that I do not now see?' He rose from his seat at sight of an advancing group.—It approached near; and laid the dead body of a warrior down before him. 'Thus,' cried one of the supporters, in stifled sounds, 'has my father proved his love for Scotland!'—It was Murray who spoke; it was the Earl of Bothwell that lay a breathless corpse at his feet!

'Grievous has been the havoc of Scot on Scot!' cried the intrepid Graham, who had seconded the arm of Murray in the contest for his father's body: 'Your steadiness, Sir William Wallace, would have retrieved the day, but for the murderer of his country; that Bruce, for whom you refused to be our king, thus destroys her bravest sons. —Their blood be on his head!' continued the young chief, extending his martial arms towards heaven; 'Power of Justice, hear! and let his days be troubled, and his death covered with dishonour!'

'My brave friend!' replied Wallace, 'his deeds will avenge themselves; he needs not further malediction. Let us rather bless the remains of him who is gone before us, thus in glory, to his heavenly rest!—Ah! better is it thus to be laid in the bed of honour, than, by surviving, witness the calamities which the double treason of this day will bring upon our martyred country!—Murray, my friend!' cried he to Lord Andrew, 'we must not let the brave dead perish in vain! Their monument shall yet be Scotland's liberties. Fear not, that we are *forsaken*, because of these traitors: but remember, *our time is in the hand of the God of justice and of mercy!*'

Tears were coursing each other in mute woe down the cheeks of the affectionate son. He could not for some time answer Wallace, but he grasped his hand, and at last rapidly articulated; 'Others may have fallen; but not mortally like him. Life may yet be preserved in some of our brave companions. Leave me, then, to mourn my dead alone! and seek ye them.'

Wallace saw that filial tenderness yearned for the moment when it might unburden its grief unchecked by observation. He arose, and making a sign to his friends, withdrew towards his men. Having sent a detachment to guard the sacred enclosure of Dunipacis, he despatched Graham on the dangerous duty of gathering a reinforcement for the morning. Then, sending Scrymgeour with a resolute band across the Carron to bring in the wounded

(for Edward had encamped his army about a mile south of the field of action), he took his lonely course along the northern bank, towards a shallow ford; near which he supposed the squadrons of Lord Loch-awe must have fought, and where he hoped to gain accounts of him from some straggling survivor of his clan. When he arrived at a point where the river is narrowest, and winds its dark stream beneath impending heights, he blew the Campbell pibroch: the notes reverberated from rock to rock; but, unanswered, died away in distant echoes. Still he would not relinquish hope, and pursuing the path, emerged on an open glade. The unobstructed rays of the moon illumined every object. Across the river, at some distance from the bank, a division of the Southron tents whitened the deep shadows of the bordering woods; and before them, on the blood-stained plain, he thought he descried a solitary warrior. Wallace stopped.—The man approached the margin of the stream, and looked towards the Scottish chief. The visor of Wallace being up, discovered his heroic countenance, bright in the moonbeams; and the majesty of his mien seemed to declare him to the Southron knight to be no other than the Regent of Scotland.

'Who art thou?' cried the warrior, with a voice of command, that better became his lips than it was adapted to the man whom he addressed.

'The enemy of England!' cried the chief.

'Thou art Wallace!' was the immediate reply; 'none else dare answer the Lord of Carrick and of Annandale with such haughty boldness.'

'Every Scot in this land,' returned Wallace, inflamed with an indignation he did not attempt to repress, 'would thus answer Bruce, not only in reference to England, but to himself! to that Bruce, who, not satisfied with having abandoned his people to their enemies, has stolen, a base fratricide, to slay his brethren in their home! To have met them on the plain of Stanmore, would have been a deed his posterity might have bewailed; but what horror,

what shame will be theirs, when they know that he came to ruin his own rights, to stab his people in the very bosom of his country!—I come from gazing on the murdered body of the virtuous Earl of Bothwell! The Lords Bute and Fyfe, and perhaps Loch-awe, have fallen beneath the Southron sword and your unnatural arm; and yet do you demand what Scot would dare to tell you that he holds the Earl of Carrick and his coadjutors as his most mortal foes?'

'Ambitious man! Dost thou flatter thyself with belief that I am to be deceived by thy pompous declamation? I know the motive of all this pretended patriotism. I am well informed of the aim of all this vaunted prowess; and I came, not to fight the battles of King Edward, but to punish the proud usurper of the rights of Bruce.—I have gained my point. My brave followers slew the Lord of Bothwell; my brave followers made the hitherto invincible Sir William Wallace retreat!—I came in the power of my birthright: and, as your lawful king, I command you, this hour, to lay your rebel sword at my feet.—Obey, proud knight, or to-morrow puts you into Edward's hand; and, without appeal, you die the death of a traitor.'

'Unhappy prince,' cried Wallace, now suspecting that Bruce had been deceived, 'is it over the necks of your most loyal subjects that you would mount your throne?—How have you been mistaken!—How have you strengthened the hands of your enemy, and weakened your own, by this day's action!—The cause is now, probably, lost for ever:—and from whom are we to date its ruin, but from him to whom the nation looked as to its appointed deliverer! From him, whose once honoured name will now be regarded with execration!'

'Burden not my name, rash young man,' replied Bruce, 'with the charges belonging to your own mad ambition.—Who disturbed the peace in which Scotland reposed after the battle of Dunbar, but William Wallace? Who raised the country in arms, but William Wallace? Who stole

from me my birthright, and fastened the people's love on himself, but William Wallace? Who affected to repel a crown that he might the more certainly fix it on his head, but William Wallace? And who dares now taunt me with his errors and mishaps, but the same traitor to his lawful sovereign?'

'Shall I answer thee, Lord of Carrick,' replied Wallace, 'with a similar appeal?—Who, when the Southron tyrant preferred a false claim to the supremacy of this realm, subscribed to the falsehood; and, by that action, did all in his power to make a free people slaves?—Who, when the brand of cruelty swept this kingdom from shore to shore, lay indolent in the usurper's court, and heard of these oppressions without a sigh? Who,—horror on horror!—brought an army into his own inheritance to slay his brethren, and to lay it desolate before his mortal foe? Thy heart will tell thee, Bruce, who is this man! and if honour yet remain in that iron region, thou wilt not disbelieve the asseverations of an honest Scot, who proclaims that it was to save them, whom thou didst abandon, that he appeared in the armies of Scotland. It was to supply the place of thy desertion that he assumed the rule, with which a grateful people, rescued from bondage, invested him.'

'Bold chieftain!' exclaimed Bruce, 'is it thus you continue to brave your offended prince! But in pity to your youth, in admiration of a prowess which would have been godlike had it been exerted for your sovereign, and not used as a bait to satisfy an ambition wild as it is towering; I would expostulate with you: I would even deign to tell you, that in granting the supremacy of Edward, the royal Bruce submits not to the mere wish of a despot, but to the necessity of the times. This is not an era of so great loyalty, that any sovereign may venture to contend against such an imperial arm as Edward's. And would you, a boy in years, a novice in politics, and though brave and till this day successful, would you pretend to prolong

a war with the dictator of kingdoms? Can rational discrimination be united with the valour you possess, and you not perceive the unequal conquest between a weak state, deprived of its head and agitated by intestine commotions, and a mighty nation conducted by the ablest and most martial monarch of his age? A man who is not only determined to maintain his pretensions to Scotland, but is master of every resource, either for protracting war or pushing it with vigour. If the love of your country be indeed your motive for perseverance, your obstinacy tends only to lengthen her misery. But if, as I believe is the case, you carry your views to private aggrandisement, reflect on their probable issue. Should Edward, by a miracle, withdraw his armies, and an intoxicated people elevate their minion to the throne, the lords of Scotland would reject the bold invasion, and with the noble vengeance of insulted greatness, hurl from his height the proud usurper of their rights and mine.'

'To usurp any man's rights, and least of all, my king's,' replied Wallace, 'never came within the range of my thoughts. Though lowly born, Lord Carrick, I am not so base as to require assumption to give me dignity. I saw my country made a garrison of Edward's; I beheld its people, outraged in every relation that is dear to man. Who heard their cry? Where was Bruce? Where the nobles of Scotland; that none arose to extinguish her burning villages, to shelter the mother and the child, to rescue purity from violation, to defend the bleeding father and his son? The shrieks of despair resounded through the land, and none appeared! The hand of violence fell on my own house! the wife of my bosom was stabbed to the heart by a magistrate of the usurper! I then drew the sword!—I took pity on those who suffered, as I had suffered! I espoused their cause;—and never will I forsake it, till life forsake me. Therefore, that I became the champion of Scotland, Lord of Carrick, blame not my ambition; but rather the supineness of the nobility, and

chiefly yourself:—you, who, uniting personal merit to dignity of descent, had deserted the post, which both nature and circumstance called upon you to occupy!—Had the Scots, from the time of Baliol's abdication, possessed such a leader as yourself, (for what is the necessity of the times, but the pusillanimity of those who ought to contend with Edward?) by your valour, and their union, you must have surmounted every difficulty under which we struggle; and have closed the contest, with success and honour. If you now start from your guilty delusion, it may not be too late to rescue Scotland from the perils which surround her. Listen then to my voice, prince of the blood of Alexander! forswear the tyrant, who has cajoled you to this abandonment of your country, and resolve to be her deliverer. The bravest of the Scots are ready to acknowledge you their lord, to reign as your forefathers did, untrammelled by any foreign yoke. Exchange then the base vassalage, for freedom and a throne! Awake to yourself, noble Bruce, and behold what it is that I propose! Heaven itself cannot set a more glorious prize before the eyes of virtue or ambition, than to join in one object, the acquisition of royalty, with the maintenance of national independence! Such is my last appeal to you. For myself, as I am well convinced that the real welfare of my country, can never subsist with the sacrifice of her liberties, I am determined, as far as in me lies, to prolong, not her miseries, but her integrity, by preserving her from the contamination of slavery. But, should mysterious fate decree her fall, may that power, which knows the vice and horrors which accompany a tyrant's reign, terminate the existence of a people, who can no longer preserve their lives but by receiving laws from usurpation!'

The truth and gallantry of these sentiments, struck the awakened mind of Bruce, with the force of conviction. Another auditor was nigh, who also lost not a syllable; 'and the flame was conveyed from the breast of one hero, to that of the other.'

Bruce and Wallace Meet after Falkirk

Lord Carrick secretly repented of all that he had done; but being too proud to acknowledge so much, he briefly answered—'Wallace, your words have made an impression on me, that may one day still more brighten the glory of your fame. Be silent respecting this conference:—be faithful to the principles you have declared, and ere long you shall hear royally of Bruce.' As he spoke he turned away, and was lost among the trees.

Wallace stood for some minutes musing on what had passed, when, hearing a footstep behind him, he turned round, and beheld, approaching him, a young and graceful form, habited in a white hacqueton wrought in gold; with golden spurs on his feet, and a helmet of the same costly metal on his head, crested with white feathers. Had the scene been in Palestine, he might have mistaken him for the host's guardian angel, in arms. But the moment the eyes of Wallace fell on him, the stranger hastened forward, and threw himself on one knee before him, with so noble a grace that the chief was lost in wonder what this beautiful apparition could mean. The youth, after an agitated pause, bowing his head, exclaimed, 'Pardon this intrusion, bravest of men! I come to offer you my heart, my life! To wash out, by your side, in the blood of the enemies of Scotland, the stigma which now dishonours the name of Bruce!'—'And who are you, noble youth?' cried Wallace, raising him from the ground. 'Surely my prayers are at last answered; and I hear these sentiments from one of Alexander's race!'

'I am indeed of his blood,' replied he; 'and it must now be my study to prove my descent, by deeds worthy of my ancestor. I am Robert Bruce, the eldest son of the Earl of Carrick and Annandale. Grieving over the slaughter that his valiant arm has made of his own people, (although, till you taught him otherwise, he believed they fought to maintain the usurpation of an ambitious subject,) he walked out in melancholy. I followed at a distance; and I heard, unseen, all that has passed between you and him.

He has retired to his tent; and, unknown to him, I hastened across the Carron, to avow my loyalty to virtue; to declare my determination to live for Scotland, or to die for her; and to follow the arms of Sir William Wallace, till he plants my father in the throne of his ancestors.'

'I take you at your word, brave prince!' replied the Regent; 'and this night shall give you an opportunity to redeem to Scotland, what your father's sword has this day wrested from her. What I mean to do, must be effected in the course of a few hours. That done, it will be prudent for you to return to the Carrick Camp; and there take the most effectual means to persuade your father to throw himself into the arms of Scotland. The whole nation will then rally round their King; and as his weapon of war, I shall rejoice to fulfil the commission with which God has intrusted me!' He then briefly unfolded to the eagerly listening Bruce, (whose aspiring spirit, inflamed by the fervour of youth, and winged by natural courage, saw the glory alone of the enterprise,) an attack which he meant to make on the camp of Edward, while his victorious troops slept in fancied security.

He had sent Sir John Graham to Stirling, to call out its garrison; Ker, he had despatched on a similar errand; and expecting that by this time some of the troops would be arrived on the southern extremity of the Carse, he threw his plaid over the prince's splendid garb, to conceal him from notice; then returning to the few who lay on the northern bank of the river, he asked one of the young Gordons to lend him his armour, saying, he had use for it,—and to seek another suit, in the heap that had been collected from the buried dead. The brave Scot cheerfully acquiesced; and, Wallace retiring amongst the trees with his royal companion, Bruce soon covered his gay hacqueton with this rough mail; and placing the Scottish bonnet on his head put a large stone into the golden helmet, and sunk it in the waters of the Carron. Being thus completely armed like one of the youthful clansmen in the

ranks (and such disguise was necessary), Wallace put the trusty claymore of his country, into its prince's hand; and clasping him with a hero's warmth to his heart—'Now it is,' cried he, 'that William Wallace lives anew, since he has seen this hour!'

On re-emerging from the wood, they met Sir John Graham, who had just arrived with five hundred fugitives from Lord Bute's slaughtered division, whom he had rallied on the Carse. He informed his friend, that the Earl of Mar was within half a mile of the Carron, with three thousand more; and that he would soon be joined by other reinforcements, to a similar amount. While Graham yet spoke, a squadron of armed men approached from the Forth side. Wallace, advancing towards them, beheld the Bishop of Dunkeld, in his sacerdotal robes at their head, but with a corslet on his breast, and instead of his crosier, he carried a drawn sword:—'We come to you, champion of Scotland,' cried the prelate, 'with the prayers, and the arms of the church. The sword of the Levites of old, smote the enemies of Israel; and, in the same faith, that the God of Justice will go before us this night, we come to fight for Scotland's liberties.'

His followers were the younger brethren of the monastery of Cambus Kenneth, and others from the neighbouring convents; altogether making a stout and well-appointed legion.

'With this handful,' cried Wallace, 'Heaven may find a David, who shall yet strike yon Goliath on the forehead!'

Lord Mar, and Lord Lennox, now came up: and Wallace, marshalling his train, found that he had nearly ten thousand men. He gave to each leader, his plan of attack: and having placed Bruce, with Graham, in the van; before he took his station at its head, he retired to the ruins near Dunipacis, to visit the mourning solitude of Murray. He found the pious son, sitting silent and motionless by the side of his dead parent. Without arousing the violence of grief, by any reference to the sight

before him, Wallace briefly communicated his project. Lord Andrew started on his feet;—'I will share all the peril with you! I shall again grapple with the foe, that has thus bereaved me!—This dark mantle,' cried he, turning towards the breathless corse, and throwing his plaid over it, 'will shroud thy hallowed remains, till I return.—I go, where thou wouldst direct me.—Oh, my father!' exclaimed he, in a burst of grief, 'the trumpet shall sound, and thou wilt not hear! But I go, to take vengeance for thy blood!' So saying, he sprang from the place; and accompanying Wallace to the plain, took his station in the silent, but swiftly moving army.

CHAPTER XXXIV

CARRON BANKS

The troops of King Edward, lay overpowered with wine. Elated with victory, they had drunk largely; the royal pavilion setting them the example; for though Edward was temperate, yet to flatter his recovered friends, the inordinate Buchan and Soulis, he had allowed a greater excess that night, than he was accustomed to sanction. The banquet over, every knight retired to his tent; every soldier, to his pallet; and a deep sleep lay upon every man. The King himself, whose many thoughts had long kept waking, now fell into a slumber.

Guards had been placed around the camp, more from military ceremony than an idea of their necessity. The strength of Wallace, they believed broken; and that they should have nothing to do next morning, but to chase him into Stirling, and take him there. But the spirit of the Regent, was not so easily subdued. He ever thought it shameful to despair, while it was possible to make a stand. And now, leading his determined followers through the lower grounds of Cumbernauld; he detached half his force under Mar, to take the Southron camp in the rear;

while he should attack the front, and pierce his way to the royal pavilion.

With soundless caution, the battalion of Mar wound round the banks of the Forth, to reach the point of its destination; and Wallace, proceeding with as noiseless a step, gained the hill which overlooked his sleeping enemies. His front ranks, shrouded by branches they had torn from the trees in Torwood, now stood still.—Without this precaution, had any eye looked from the Southron line, they must have been perceived; but now, should a hundred gaze on them, their figures were so blended with the adjoining thickets, they might easily be mistaken for a part of them. As the moon sunk in the horizon, they moved gently down the hill; and scarcely drawing breath, were within a few paces of the first outpost—when one of the sentinels starting from his reclining position, suddenly exclaimed, 'What sound is that?'—'Only the wind amongst the trees,' returned his comrade; 'I see their branches waving. Let me sleep! for Wallace yet lives, and we may have hot work to-morrow.' Wallace did live; and the man slept—to wake no more; for the next instant, a Scottish brand was through every Southron heart on the outpost. That done, Wallace threw away his bough, leaped the narrow dyke which lay in front of the camp; and, with Bruce and Graham at the head of a chosen band of brave men, cautiously proceeded onward to reach the pavilion. At the moment he should blow his bugle, the divisions he had left with Lennox and Murray, and the Lord Mar, were to press forward to the same point.

Still all lay in profound repose;—and guided by the lamps, which burnt around the royal quarters, the dauntless Scots reached the tent. Wallace had already laid his hand upon the curtain that was its entrance, when an armed man with a presented pike, demanded, 'Who comes here?' the Regent's answer laid the interrogator's head at his feet; but the voice had awakened the ever-watchful King. Perceiving his own danger, in the fall of

the sentinel, he snatched his sword; and calling aloud on his sleeping train, sprang from his couch. He was immediately surrounded by half a score knights, who started on their feet before Wallace could reach the spot. Short, however, would have been their protection: they fell before his arm, and that of Graham, and left a vacant place; for Edward had disappeared. Foreseeing, from the first prowess of these midnight invaders, the fate of his guards, he had made a timely escape, by cutting a passage for himself through the canvas of his tent. Wallace perceived that his prize had eluded his grasp; but hoping to at least drive him from the field, he blew the appointed signal to Mar and Lennox; caught one of the lamps from the monarch's table, and setting fire to the adjoining drapery, rushed from its blazing volumes, to meet his brave colleagues amongst the disordered lines. Graham and his followers, with firebrands in their hands, threw conflagration into all parts of the camp; and, with the fearful war-cries of their country, seemed to assail the terrified enemy from every direction. Men, half dressed and unarmed, rushed from their tents upon the pikes of their enemies; hundreds fell without striking a blow; and they who were stationed nearest the outposts, betook themselves to flight; scattering themselves in scared throngs over the amazed plains of Linlithgow.

The King in vain sought to rally his men; to remind them of their late victory. His English alone hearkened to his call: superstition had laid her petrifying hand on all the rest.—The Irish, saw a terrible judgment in this scene; believing it had fallen upon them, for having taken arms against their sister people: the Welsh, as they descried the warlike Bishop of Dunkeld, issuing from the mists of the river, and charging his foaming steed through their flying defiles, could not persuade themselves that Merlin had not arisen, to chastise their obedience to the ravager of their country. Every superstitious, every panic fear, took possession of the half-intoxicated, half-dreaming

wretches; and falling in bloody and unresisting heaps all around, it was rather a slaughter than a battle. Opposition seemed everywhere abandoned, excepting on the spot still maintained by the King of England, and his brave countrymen. The faithless Scots, who had followed the Cummins to the field, also stood there, and fought with desperation. Wallace opposed the despair and valour of his adversaries, with the steadiness of his men; and Graham, having seized some of the war-engines, discharged a shower of blazing arrows upon the Southron phalanx.

The camp was now on fire in every direction; and putting all to the hazard of one decisive blow, Edward ordered his men to make at once to the point, where, by the light of the flaming tents, he could perceive the waving plumes of Wallace. With his ponderous mace held terribly in the air, the King himself bore down to the shock; and breaking through the intervening combatants, assaulted the chief. The might of ten thousand souls was then in the arm of the Regent of Scotland. The puissant Edward wondered at himself, as he shrank from before his strokes; as he shuddered at the heroic fierceness of a countenance which seemed more than mortal. Was it indeed the Scottish chieftain? or some armed delegate from heaven, descended to fight the battles of the oppressed?—Edward trembled: his mace was struck from his hand;—but immediately a glittering falchion supplied its place, and with recovering presence of mind he renewed the combat.

Meanwhile, the young Bruce, (who, in his humble armour, might have been passed by as an enemy for meaner swords,) checking the onward speed of March, pierced him at once through the heart: 'Die, thou disgrace to the name of Scot,' cried he, 'and with thy blood expunge my stains!' His sword now laid all opposition at his feet:—and while the tempest of death blew around; the groans of the dying, the shrieks of the wounded, and the outcries of those who were perishing in the flames,

drove the King's ranks to distraction; and raised so great a fear in the minds of the Cummin clan, that breaking from the royal line with yells of dismay, they fled in all directions after their already fugitive allies.

Edward saw the Earl of March fall; and finding himself wounded in many places, with a backward step he received the blows of Wallace; but that determined chief, following his advantage, made a stroke at the King, which threw him astounded into the arms of his followers. At that moment Lincoln raised his arm, to strike his dagger into the back of Wallace; but Graham arrested the blow, and sent the young lord a motionless body to the earth. The Southron ranks, closed immediately before their insensible monarch; and a contest more desperate than any which had preceded it, took place. Hosts seemed to fall on both sides; at last the Southrons (having stood their ground till Edward was carried from further danger) suddenly wheeled about, and fled precipitately towards the east. Wallace pursued them on full charge; driving them across the lowlands of Linlithgow; where he learnt, from some prisoners he took, that the Earl of Carrick was in the Lothians; having retreated thither, on the first tidings that the Scots had attacked the English camp.

'Now is your time,' said Wallace to Bruce, 'to rejoin your father. Bring him to Scotland; where a free crown awaits him. Your actions of this night, must be a pledge to your country, of the virtues which will support his throne!'

The younger warrior, throwing off his rugged hauberk, in a retired glen, appeared again as a prince; and embracing the Regent, 'A messenger from myself or from my father,' said he, 'shall meet you at Stirling: meanwhile, farewell!—and give my thanks to the young Gordon, whose sword armed me for Scotland!'

Bruce mounted the horse Wallace had prepared; and, spurring along the banks of the Almond, was soon lost amidst its luxuriant shades.

Wallace still led the pursuit of Edward; and meeting those auxiliaries from the adjoining counties, which his provident orders had prepared to turn out on the first appearance of this martial chase; he poured his troops through Ettrick forest, and drove the flying host of England far into Northumberland.—There, checking his triumphant squadrons, he recalled his stragglers; and returned, with abated speed, into his own country. Halting on the north bank of the Tweed, he sent to their quarters those bands which belonged to the border castles; and then marched leisurely forward; that his brave soldiers, who had sustained the weight of the battle, might recover their exhausted strength.

The Regent's expectations, that he should soon fall in with some of the chasing squadrons, were the next morning gratified. Crossing the Bathgate hills, he met the returning battalions of Lennox, with Lord Mar's, and also Sir John Graham's. Lord Lennox was thanked by Wallace, for his good services; and immediately despatched, to reoccupy his station in Dumbarton. But the captains of Mar, and of Graham, could give no other account of their leaders, than that they saw them last, fighting valiantly in the Southron camp; and had since supposed, that during the pursuit they must have joined the Regent's squadron. A cold dew fell over the limbs of Wallace at these tidings; he looked on Murray, and on Edwin. The expression of the former's face, told him what were his fears; but Edwin, ever sanguine, strove to encourage the hope that all might yet be well.—'They may not have yet returned from the pursuit; or they may be gone on to Stirling.'

But these comfortings, were soon dispelled by the appearance of Lord Ruthven; who (having been apprised of the Regent's approach) came forth to meet him. The pleasure of seeing the Earl so far recovered, as to have been able to leave Hunting-tower, was checked by the first glance of his face, on which was deeply characterised

some tale of grief. Edwin thought, it was the recent disasters of Scotland, he mourned; and with a cheering voice he exclaimed, 'Courage, my father! our Regent comes again a conqueror! Edward has once more recrossed the plains of Northumberland!'

'Thanks be to God, for that!' replied Ruthven; 'but what have not these last conflicts, cost our country! Lord Mar is wounded unto death; and lies in a chamber, next to the yet unburied corses of Lord Bute, and the dauntless Graham.'—Wallace turned deadly pale; a mist passed over his eyes, and staggering, he breathlessly supported himself on the arm of Edwin. Murray looked on him; but all was still in his heart: his own beloved father, had fallen; and in that stroke, fate seemed to have emptied all her quiver.

'Lead me to their chambers!' cried Wallace; 'show me where my friends lie: let me hear the last prayer for Scotland, from the lips of the bravest of her veterans!'

Spurring forward, he saw not the ground he trod, till ascending the hill of Falkirk, the venerable walls of its monastery presented themselves to his view. He threw himself off his horse, and entered, preceded by Lord Ruthven.

He stopped before the cell which contained the dying chief, and desired the abbot to apprise the Earl of his arrival. The sound of that voice, whose heart-consoling tones could be matched by none on earth, penetrated to the ear of his almost insensible friend. Mar started from his pillow; and Wallace, through the half-open door, heard him say—'Let him come in, Joanna! All my mortal hopes now hang on him.'

Wallace instantly stepped forward, and beheld the veteran stretched on a couch, the image of that death to which he was so rapidly approaching. He hastened towards him; and the dying man, stretching forth his arms, exclaimed,—'Come to me, Wallace, my son; the only hope of Scotland, the only human trust of this anxious paternal heart!'

Wallace threw himself on his knees beside him, and taking his hand, pressed it in speechless anguish to his lips; every present grief, was then weighing on his soul, and denied him the power of utterance. Lady Mar sat by the pillow of her husband; but she bore no marks of the sorrow, which convulsed the frame of Wallace. She looked serious; but her cheek wore its freshest bloom. She spoke not; and the veteran allowed the tears of enfeebled nature, to fall on the bent head of his friend. 'Mourn not for me!' cried he, 'nor think that these are regretful drops. I die, as I have wished, in the field for Scotland. Time must have soon laid my grey hairs, ignobly in the grave; and to enter it thus, covered with honourable wounds, is glory;—and has long been my prayer! But, dearest, most unwearied of friends! still the tears of mortality will flow; for I leave my children, fatherless in this faithless world.—And my Helen!—Oh, Wallace! the angel who exposed her precious self, through the dangers of that midnight walk, to save Scotland, her father, and his friends! is—lost to us!—Joanna, tell the rest,' said he, gasping, 'for I cannot.'

Wallace turned to Lady Mar, with an inquiring look of such wild horror, that she found her tongue cleave to the roof of her mouth, and her complexion faded into the pallidness of his. 'Surely,' exclaimed he, 'there is not to be a wreck of all that is estimable on earth! The Lady Helen is not dead?'—'No,' rejoined the Earl; 'but—' he could proceed no further, and Lady Mar forced herself to speak.—'She has fallen into the hands of the enemy. On my Lord's being brought to this place, he sent for myself and Lady Helen; but in passing by Dunipacis, an armed squadron issued from behind the mound, and putting our attendants to flight, carried her off. I escaped hither. The reason of this attack, was explained afterwards by one of the Southrons, who, having been wounded by our escort, was taken and brought to Falkirk. He said, that Lord Aymer de Valence, having been sent by his beset

monarch to call Lord Carrick to his assistance, found the Bruce's camp deserted; but, by accident, learning that Lady Helen Mar was to be brought to Falkirk, he stationed himself behind Dunipacis; and springing out as soon as our cavalcade was in view, seized her. She obtained, the rest were allowed to escape. But as Lord de Valence loves Helen, I cannot doubt he will have sufficient honour, not to insult the fame of her family; and so will make her his wife.'

'God forbid!' ejaculated Mar, holding up his trembling hands; 'God forbid, that my blood should ever mingle with that of any one of the people who have wrought such woe to Scotland! Swear to me, valiant Wallace, by the virtues of her virgin heart, by your own immaculate honour, that you will move heaven and earth, to rescue my Helen from the power of this Southron lord!'

'So help me Heaven!' answered Wallace, looking steadfastly upwards.

CHAPTER XXXV

CHURCH OF FALKIRK

No eye closed that night, in the monastery of Falkirk. The Earl of Mar awaked about the twelfth hour, and sent to call Lord Ruthven, Sir William Wallace, and his nephews, to attend him. As they approached, the priests who had just anointed his dying head with the sacred unction, drew back. The Countess, and Lady Ruthven, supported his pillow. He smiled, as he heard the advancing steps of those so dear to him. 'I send for you,' said he, 'to give you the blessing of a true Scot and a Christian! May all who are here in Thy blessed presence, Redeemer of mankind!' cried he, looking up with a supernatural brightness in his eye, 'die as I do, rather than survive, to see Scotland enslaved! But O! may they rather, long live under that liberty, perpetuated, which Wallace has again given to his country: peaceful will then be their

last moments on earth, and full of joy their entrance into heaven!' His eyes closed as the concluding word died upon his tongue. Lady Ruthven looked intently on him: she bent her face to his, but he breathed no more; and with a feeble cry, she fell back in a swoon.

The soul of the veteran Earl, was indeed fled. The Countess was taken, shrieking, out of the apartment; but Wallace, Edwin, and Murray, remained, kneeling around the corse. Anthems for the departed, were raised over the body; and when they concluded, the priests throwing over it a cloud of incense, the mourners withdrew, and separated to their chambers.

Afterwards, a monk approached him, attended by a shepherd boy. At the sound of steps, Wallace looked up: 'This young man,' said the father, 'brings despatches to the Lord Regent.' Wallace rose, and the youth presented his packet.—Withdrawing to a little distance, he broke the seal, and read to this effect:—

'My father, and myself, are in the castle of Durham, and both under an arrest.' We are to remain so, till our arrival in London renders its sovereign, in his own opinion, more secure: when there, you shall hear from me again. Meanwhile be on your guard: the gold of Edward has found its way into your councils. Beware of them, who, with patriotism in their mouths, are purchased to betray you and their country, into the hands of your enemy! Truest, noblest, best of Scots, farewell!—I must not write more explicitly.

'P.S.—The messenger who takes this, is a simple border shepherd: he knows not whence comes the packet; hence, he cannot bring an answer.'

Wallace closed the letter; and putting gold into the shepherd's hand, left the chapel. In passing through the cloisters, he met Ruthven just returned from Stirling; whither he had gone to inform the chiefs of the council, of the Regent's arrival. 'When I summoned them to the council-hall,' continued Lord Ruthven, 'and told them

you had not only defeated Edward on the Carron, but in so doing, had gained a double victory,—over a foreign usurper, and domestic traitors!—instead of the usual open-hearted gratulations on such a communication, a low whisper murmured through the hall; and the young Badenoch, unworthy of his patriotic father, rising from his seat, gave utterance to so many invectives against you, our country's soul, and arm! I should deem it treason, even to repeat them. Suffice it to say, that out of five hundred chiefs and chieftains who were present, not one of those parasites, who used to fawn on you a week ago, and make the love of honest men seem doubtful, now breathes one word for Sir William Wallace. But this ingratitude, vile as it is, I bore with patience, till Badenoch, growing in insolency, declared, that late last night despatches had arrived from the King of France to the Regent; and that he (in right of his birth, assuming to himself that dignity,) had put their bearer, Sir Alexander Ramsay, under confinement for having persisted to dispute his authority, to withhold them from you.'

Wallace who had listened in silence, drew a deep sigh as Ruthven concluded; and, in that profound breath exclaimed—'God must be our fortress still; must save Scotland, from this gangrene in her heart! Ramsay shall be released: but I must first meet these violent men. And it must be alone, my Lord,' continued he; 'you, and our coadjutors, may wait my return at the city gates; but the sword of Edward, if need be, shall defend me against his gold.'—As he spoke, he laid his hand on the jewelled weapon which hung at his side, and which he had wrested from that monarch in the last conflict.

Aware that this treason, aimed at him, would strike his country, unless timely warded off, he took his resolution; and requesting Ruthven not to communicate to any one what had passed, he mounted his horse, and struck into the road to Stirling. He took the plume from his crest, and closing his visor, enveloped himself in his plaid, that

the people might not know him as he went along. But casting away his cloak, and unclasping his helmet at the door of the keep, he entered the council-hall, openly and abruptly. By an instantaneous impulse of respect, which even the base pay to virtue, almost every man rose at his appearance. He bowed to the assembly; and walked with a composed, but severe air, up to his station at the head of the room. Young Badenoch stood there; and as Wallace approached, he fiercely grasped his sword: 'Proud upstart!' cried he; 'betrayer of my father! set a foot further towards this chair, and the chastisement of every arm in this council, shall fall on you for your presumption.'

'It is not in the arms of thousands, to put me from my right,' replied Wallace, calmly putting forth his hand, and drawing the Regent's chair towards him.

'Will ye bear this?' cried Badenoch, stamping with his foot, and plucking forth his sword; 'is the man to exist, who thus braves the assembled lords of Scotland?' While speaking, he made a desperate lunge at the Regent's breast: Wallace caught the blade in his hand, and wrenching it from his intemperate adversary, broke it into shivers, and cast the pieces at his feet; then turning resolutely towards the chiefs, who stood appalled, and looking on each other, he said, 'I, your duly elected Regent, left you only a few days ago, to repel the enemy whom the treason of Lord March would have introduced into these very walls. Many brave chiefs followed me to that field! and more, whom I see now, loaded me as I passed, with benedictions. Portentous, was the day of Falkirk, to Scotland. Then did the mighty fall, and the heads of counsel perish.—But treason was the parricide! The late Lord Badenoch, stood his ground like a true Scot; but Athol and Buchan deserted to Edward.'—While speaking, he turned towards the furious son of Badenoch; who, gnashing his teeth in impotent rage, stood listening to the inflaming whispers of Macdougal of Lorn: 'Young

chief,' cried he, 'from their treachery, date the fate of your brave father; and the whole of our grievous loss of that day. But the wide destruction, has been avenged! more than chief, for chief, have perished in the Southron ranks; and thousands of the lowlier sort, now swell the banks of Carron. Edward himself, fell, wounded by my arm; and was borne by his flying squadrons, over the wastes of Northumberland. Thus have I returned to you, with my duties achieved in a manner worthy of your Regent! What, then, means the arrest of my ambassador? what this silence, when the representative of your power, is insulted to your face?'

'They mean,' cried Badenoch, 'that my words, are the utterance of their sentiments.'—'They mean,' cried Lorn, 'that the prowess of the haughty boaster, whom their intoxicated gratitude raised from the dust; shall not avail him, against the indignation of a nation, over which he dares to arrogate a right.'

'Mean they what they will,' returned Wallace, 'they cannot dispossess me of the rights with which assembled Scotland invested me on the plains of Stirling. And again I demand, by what authority do you, and they, presume to imprison my officer; and withhold from me, the papers sent by the King of France to the Regent of Scotland?'

'By an authority that we will maintain,' replied Badenoch; 'by the right of my royal blood, and by the sword of every brave Scot, who spurns at the name of Wallace!'—'And as a proof that we speak not more than we act,' cried Lorn, making a sign to the chiefs, 'you are our prisoner!' Many weapons were instantly unsheathed; and their bearers, hurrying to the side of Badenoch and Lorn, attempted to lay hands on Wallace; but he drawing the sword of Edward, with a sweep of his valiant arm that made the glittering blade seem a brand of fire, set his back against the wall, and exclaimed—'He that first makes a stroke at me, shall find his death on this Southron

steel! This sword, I made the puissant arm of the usurper yield to me; and this sword shall defend the Regent of Scotland, against his ungrateful countrymen!'

The chieftains who pressed on him, recoiled at these words; but their leaders, Badenoch and Lorn, waved them forward, with vehement exhortations:—'Desist, young men!' continued he; 'provoke me not beyond my bearing. With a single blast of my bugle, I could surround this building with a band of warriors, who at sight of their chief being thus assaulted, would lay this tumult, in blood.—Let me pass, or abide the consequence!'

'Through my breast, then;' exclaimed Badenoch; 'for with my consent, you pass not here but on your bier.—What is in the arm of a single man,' cried he to the lords, 'that ye cannot fall on him at once, and cut him down?'

'I would not hurt a son of the virtuous Badenoch;' returned Wallace; 'but his life be on your heads,' said he, turning to the chiefs, 'if one of you point a sword to impede my passage.'—'And wilt thou dare it? usurper of my power and honours!' cried Badenoch: 'Lorn, stand by your friend:—all here, who are true to the Cummin and Macdougal, hem in the tyrant.'

Many a traitor hand now drew forth its dagger; and the intemperate Badenoch, drunk with choler and mad ambition, snatching a sword from one of his accomplices, made another violent plunge at Wallace; but its metal flew in splinters on the guard-stroke of the Regent, and left Badenoch at his mercy. 'Defend me, chieftains, or I am slain!' cried he. But Wallace did not let his hand follow its advantage: with the dignity of conscious desert, he turned from the vanquished; and casting the enraged Lorn from him, who had thrown himself in his way; he exclaimed—'Scots! that arm will wither, which dares to point its steel at me.'—The pressing crowd, struck in astonishment, parted before him as they would have done in the path of a thunderbolt; and, unimpeded, he passed to the door.

That their Regent had entered the keep, was soon rumoured through the city; and when he appeared from the gate, he was hailed by the acclamations of the people. He found his empire again, in the hearts of the lowly: they whom he had restored to their cottages, knelt to him in the streets, and called for blessings on his name; while they—oh! blasting touch of envy!—whom he had restored to castles, and elevated from a state of vassalage, to the power of princes, they raised against him that very power, to lay him in the dust.

When Wallace looked around him; and saw the space before the keep, filled with armed men and citizens, he ascended an elevated piece of ground, which rose a little to the left; and waving his hand in token that he intended to speak, a profound silence took place of the buzz of admiration, gratitude, and discontent. He then addressed the people, 'Brother soldiers! Friends! And, am I so to distinguish Scots? Enemies!' At this word, a loud cry of 'Perish all, who are the enemies of our glorious Regent!' penetrated to the inmost chambers of the citadel.

Believing that the few of his partisans who had ventured out, were falling under the vengeance of Wallace, Badenoch, with a brandished weapon, and followed by the rest, sallied towards the door: but there he stopped, for he saw his friends standing unmolested.

Wallace proceeded; and, with calm dignity, announced the hatred that was now poured upon him by a large part of that nobility who had been so eager to invest him with the high office he then held.—'Though they have broken their oaths,' cried he, 'I have fulfilled mine! They vowed to me, all lawful obedience: I swore to free Scotland, or to die. Every castle in this realm, is restored to its ancient lord: every fortress, is filled with a native garrison: the sea is covered with our ships: and the kingdom, one in itself, sits secure behind her well-defended bulwarks. Such have I, through the strength of the Almighty arm, made Scotland!—Beloved by a grateful people, I could

wield half her power to the destruction of the rest; but I would not pluck one stone out of the building I have raised. To-day I deliver up my commission, since its design is accomplished. I resign the Regency.' As he spoke, he took off his helmet, and stood uncovered before the people.

'No, no!' seemed the voice from every lip; 'we will acknowledge no other power, we will obey no other leader!'

Wallace expressed his sense of their attachment; but repeating to them, that he had fulfilled the end of his office, by setting them free; he explained, that his retaining it was no longer necessary.—'Should I remain your Regent,' continued he, 'the country would be involved in ruinous dissensions. The majority of your nobles, now find a vice in the virtue they once extolled; and seeing its power no longer needful, seek to destroy my upholders with myself. I therefore remove the cause of contention. I quit the regency: and I bequeath your liberty, to the care of your chiefs. But, should it be again in danger, remember, that while life breathes in this heart, the spirit of William Wallace will be with you still!'

With these words he descended the mound, and mounted his horse amidst the cries and tears of the populace.—They clung to his garments, as he rode along; and the women, with their children, throwing themselves on their knees in his path, implored him not to leave them to the inroads of a ravager; not to abandon them to the tyranny of their own lords; who, unrestrained by a king, or a regent like himself, would soon subvert his good laws, and reign despots over every district in the country. Wallace answered their entreaties, with the language of encouragement; adding, that he was not their prince, to lawfully maintain a disputed power over the legitimate chiefs of the land; 'But,' he said, 'a rightful sovereign, may yet be yielded to your prayers:—and to procure that blessing, daughters of Scotland, night and day invoke the Giver of every good gift.'

When Wallace, and his weeping train, separated at the foot of Falkirk hill, he was met by his veterans of Lanark; who, having heard of what had passed in the citadel, advanced to him, with one voice to declare, that they never would fight under any other commander. 'Wherever you are, my faithful friends,' returned he, 'you shall still obey my word.' When he entered the monastery, the opposition that was made to his resignation of the regency, by the Bishop of Dunkeld, Lord Loch-awe, and others, was so vehement, so persuasive, that had not Wallace been steadily principled not to involve his country in domestic war, he must have yielded to the affectionate eloquence of their pleading. But showing to them the public danger, attendant on his provoking the wild ambition of the Cummins, and their multitudinous adherents; his arguments, which the sober judgments of his friends saw conclusive, at last ended the debate. He then rose, saying, 'I have yet to perform my vow to our lamented Mar. I shall seek his daughter; and then, my brave companions, you shall hear of me, and, I trust, see me again!'

CHAPTER XXXVI

DURHAM

The sun rose, as the funeral procession of the Earl of Mar moved from before the gates of the monastery at Falkirk. Lord Ruthven and Edwin mounted their horses. The maids of the two ladies, led them forth towards the litters which were to convey them so long a journey. Lady Ruthven came first, and Wallace placed her tenderly in her carriage. The Countess next appeared, clad in the deep weeds of widowhood. Her child followed, in the arms of its nurse. At sight of the innocent babe, whom he had so often seen pressed to the fond bosom of the father it was now following to his grave, tears rushed into the eyes of Wallace. Lady Mar hid the tumult of her

feelings, on the shoulder of her maid. He advanced to her respectfully, and handing her to her vehicle, urged her to cherish life for the sake of her child. She threw herself with increased agitation on her pillow, and Wallace, deeming the presence of her babe the surest comforter, laid it tenderly by her side. At that moment, before he had relinquished it, she bent her face upon his hands, and bathing them with her tears, faintly murmured, 'Oh! Wallace, remember me!' Lord Ruthven rode up to bid adieu to his friend, and the litters moved on. Wallace promised, that both he, and Edwin, should hear of him in the course of a few days; and affectionately grasping the hand of the latter, bade him farewell.

Hear of him they should, but not see him; for it was his determination to set off that night for Durham; where, he was informed, Edward now lay, and joined by his young queen, meant to sojourn till his wounds were healed. Believing that his presence in Scotland could be no longer serviceable, and would engender continual intestine divisions, Wallace did not hesitate in fixing his course. His first object was to fulfil his vow to Lord Mar. He thought it probable, that Helen might have been carried to the English court; and that in seeking her, he might also attempt an interview with young Bruce; hoping to learn how far he had succeeded in persuading his father to leave the vassalage of Edward, and once more dare resuming the sceptre of his ancestors.

To effect his plan without hindrance, on the disappearance of the funeral cavalcade, Wallace retired to his apartment to address a letter to Lord Ruthven. In this epistle, he told the chief, that he was going on an expedition which he hoped would prove beneficial to his country; but as it was an enterprise of rashness, he would not make any one his companion: he, therefore, begged Lord Ruthven to teach his friends, to consider with candour a flight, they might otherwise deem unkind.

All the brother was in his letter to Edwin; conjuring him to prove his affection for his friend, by quietly abiding at home till they should meet again in Scotland.

He wrote to Andrew Murray (now Lord Bothwell), addressing him as the first of his compatriots who had struck a blow for Scotland: and, as his dear friend and brother soldier, he confided to his care the valiant troop which had followed him from Lanark;—'Tell them,' said he, 'that in obeying you, they still serve with me: they perform their duty to Scotland at home—I, abroad: our aim is the same; and we shall meet again at the consummation of our labours.'

These letters, he enclosed in one to Scrymgeour, with orders to despatch two of them according to their directions; but that to Murray, Scrymgeour was himself to deliver at the head of the Lanark veterans.

At the approach of twilight, Wallace quitted the monastery; leaving his packet with the porter, to present to Scrymgeour when he should arrive at his usual hour. As the chief meant to assume a border-minstrel's garb, that he might travel the country unrecognised as its once adored Regent, he took his way towards a large hollow oak in Torwood, where he had deposited his means of disguise. When arrived there, he disarmed himself of all but his sword, dirk, and breast-plate; he covered his tartan gambeson with a minstrel's cassock; and staining his bright complexion with the juice of a nut, concealed his brighter locks beneath a close bonnet. Being thus equipped, he threw his harp over his shoulder; and having, first, in that deep solitude where no eye beheld, no ear heard, but that of God, invoked a blessing on his enterprise; with a buoyant spirit, rejoicing in the power in whose light he moved, he went forth; and under the sweet serenity of a summer night, pursued his way along the broom-clad hills of Muiravenside.

All lay in profound rest. Not a human creature crossed his path, till the carol of the lark summoned the husband-

man to his toil, and spread the thymy hills and daisied pastures with herds and flocks. As the lowing of cattle descending to the water, and the bleating of sheep hailing the morning beam, came on the breeze; mingled with the joyous voices of their herdsmen, calling to each other from afar; as all met the ear of Wallace, his conscious heart could not but whisper—'I have been the happy instrument to effect this! I have restored every man to his paternal fields! I have filled all these honest breasts with gladness!'

He stopped at a little moss-covered cabin, on a burnside, beneath Craig-castle in Mid-Lothian, and was hospitably entertained by its simple inhabitants. Wallace repaid their kindness with a few ballads, which he sang accompanied by his harp. As he gave the last notes of 'King Arthur's Death in Glory,' the worthy cottar raised his head from the spade on which he leaned, and asked whether he could not sing the glory of Scotland. 'Our renowned Wallace,' said he, 'is worth King Arthur and all the stranger knights of his round table; for he not only conquers for us in war, but establishes us in happy peace. Who, like him, of all our great captains, ever took such care of the poor, as to give them, not only the bread that sustains temporal, but that which supports eternal, life? Sing us then his praises, minstrel, and tarry with us days instead of hours.' The wife, and the children, who clung around their melodious visitant, joined in this request. Wallace rose with a saddened smile, and replied, 'I cannot do what you require; but I can yield you an opportunity to oblige Sir William Wallace. Will you take a letter from him, of which I am the bearer, to Lord Dundaff at Berwick?—I have been seeking, what I have now found, a faithful Scot, with whom I could confide this trust. It is to reveal to a father's heart, the death of a son, for whom Scotland must mourn to her latest generations.'

The honest shepherd respectfully accepted this mission; and his wife, loading their guest's scrip with her choicest

fruits and cakes, accompanied him, followed by the children, to the bottom of the hill.

In this manner, sitting at the board of the lowly, and sleeping beneath the thatched roof, did Wallace pursue his way through Tweeddale, and Ettrick forest, till he reached the Cheviots. From every lip, he heard his own praises; heard them with redoubled satisfaction, for he could have no suspicion of their sincerity, as they were uttered without expectation of their ever reaching the Regent's ear.

It was the Sabbath-day, when he mounted the Cheviots. He stood on one of their summits, and leaning on his harp, contemplated the fertile dales he left behind. The gay villagers in their best attires, were thronging to their churches; while the aged, too infirm for the walk, were sitting in the sun at their cottage doors, adoring the Almighty Benefactor, in the sublimer temple of the universe. All spoke of security and happiness. 'Thus I leave thee, beloved Scotland? And on revisiting these hills, may I still behold thy sons and daughters rejoicing in the heaven-bestowed peace of their land!'

Having descended into Northumberland, his well-replenished scrip, was his provider; and when it was exhausted, he purchased food from the peasantry: he would not accept the hospitality of a country he had so lately trodden as an enemy. Here he heard his name mentioned with terror, as well as admiration. While many related circumstances of misery, to which the ravaging of their lands had reduced them, all concurred in praising the moderation with which the Scottish leader treated his conquests.

Late in the evening, he arrived on the banks of the river that surrounds the episcopal city of Durham. He crossed Framlingate bridge. His minstrel garb prevented his being stopped by the guard at the gate; but as he entered its porch, a horse that was going through, started at his abrupt appearance. Its rider suddenly exclaimed,

Wallace as a Minstrel at Edward's Court

'Fool, thou dost not see Sir William Wallace!' Then turning to the disguised knight, 'Harper,' cried he, 'you frighten my steed: draw back till I pass.' Not displeased to find the terror of him so great amongst the enemies of Scotland, that they even addressed their animals as sharers in the dread, Wallace stood out of the way;—and saw the speaker to be a young Southron knight, who with difficulty kept his seat on the restive horse. Rearing and plunging, it would have thrown its rider, had not Wallace put forth his hand and seized the bridle. By his assistance, the animal was soothed; and the young lord thanking him for his service, told him, that as a reward, he would introduce him to play before the Queen, who that day held a feast at the bishop's palace. Wallace thought it probable he might see, or hear of Lady Helen in this assembly, or find access to Bruce; and he gladly accepted the offer. The knight, who was Sir Piers Gaveston, ordering him to follow, turned his horse towards the city; and conducted Wallace through the gates of the citadel, to the palace within its walls.

On entering the banqueting-hall, he was placed by the knight in the musicians' gallery; there to await his summons to her Majesty. The entertainment being spread, and the room full of guests, the Queen was led in by the haughty bishop of the see; the King being too ill of his wounds, to allow his joining so large a company. The beauty of the lovely sister of Philip le Bel, seemed to fill the gaze and hearts of all the bystanders, and none appeared to remember that Edward was absent. Wallace hardly glanced on her youthful charms; his eyes roamed from side to side, in quest of a fairer, a dearer object; the captive daughter of his dead friend! She was not there; neither was De Valence; but Buchan, Athol, and Soulis, were near the royal Margaret, in all the pomp of feudal grandeur. In vain waved the trophied banners over their heads; they sat sullen and revengeful; for the defeat on the Carron, had obscured the treacherous victory of

Falkirk; and instead of having presented Edward to his young Queen, as the conqueror of Scotland, she had found him and them, fugitives in the castle of Durham!

Immediately on the royal band ceasing to play, Gaveston pressed towards the Queen, and told her, he had presumed to introduce a travelling minstrel into the gallery; hoping that she would order him to perform for her amusement, as he could sing legends, from the descent of the Romans, to the victories of her royal Edward. With all her age's eagerness in quest of novelties, she commanded him to be brought to her.

Gaveston having presented him; Wallace bowed, with the respect due to her sex and dignity, and to the esteem in which he held the character of her royal brother. Margaret desired him to place his harp before her, and begin to sing. As he knelt on one knee, and struck its sounding chords, she stopped him by the inquiry, of whence he came? 'From the north country,' was his reply.—'Were you ever in Scotland?' asked she.—'Many times.'

The young lords crowded round, to hear this dialogue between majesty and lowliness.—She smiled, and turned towards them, 'Do not accuse me of disloyalty, but I have a curiosity to ask another question.'—'Nothing your Majesty wishes to know,' said Bishop Beck, 'can be amiss.'—'Then tell me,' cried she, 'for you, wandering minstrels, see all great people good or bad; else how could you make songs about them!—did you ever see Sir William Wallace in your travels?'—'Often, madam.'—'Pray tell me what he is like! you probably will be unprejudiced; and that is what I can hardly expect in this case, from any of these brave lords.'—Wishing to avoid further questioning on this subject, Wallace replied, 'I have never seen him so distinctly, as to be enabled to prove any right to your Majesty's opinion of my judgment.'—'Cannot you sing me some ballad about him?' inquired she, laughing; 'and if you are a little poetical in your praise, I can

excuse you; for my royal brother thinks this bold Scot would have shone brightly in a fairer cause.'—'My songs are dedicated to glory set in the grave,' returned Wallace; 'therefore Sir William Wallace's faults, or virtues, will not be sung by me.'—'Then he is a very young man, I suppose? for you are not old, and yet you speak of not surviving him?—I was in hopes,' cried she, addressing Beck, 'that my Lord the King would have brought this Wallace to have supped with me here; but for once, rebellion overcame its master.'

Beck made some reply, which Wallace did not hear: and the Queen again turning to him, resumed, 'Minstrel, we French ladies are very fond of a good mien; and I shall be a little reconciled to your northern realms, if you tell me this Sir William Wallace is anything like as handsome as some of the gay knights by whom you see me surrounded.' Wallace smiled, and replied, 'The comeliness of Sir William Wallace, lies in a strong arm and a feeling heart: and if these be charms in the eyes of female goodness, he may hope to be not quite an object of abhorrence to the sister of Philip le Bel!' The minstrel bowed as he spoke, and the young Queen laughing again, said, 'I wish not to come within the influence of either. But sing me some Scottish legend; and I will promise, wherever I see the knight, to treat him with all courtesy due to valour.'

Wallace again struck the chords of his harp; and, with a voice, whose full and melodious tones rolled round the vast dome of the hall, he sang the triumphs of Reuther.[1] The Queen fixed her eyes upon him; and when he ended, she turned and whispered Gaveston, 'If the voice of this man had been Wallace's trumpet, I should not now wonder at the discomfiture of England. He almost tempted me from my allegiance, as the warlike animation of his notes seemed to charge the flying Southrons.' Speaking,

[1]In commemoration of the victory which this ancient Scottish prince obtained over the Britons before the Christian era, the field of conquest has ever since been called Rutherglen.

she rose; and presenting a jewelled ring to the minstrel, left the apartment.

The lords crowded out after her; and the musicians coming down from the gallery, seated themselves with much rude jollity, to regale on the remnants of the feast. Wallace, who had discovered the senachie[1] of Bruce, by the escutcheon of Annandale suspended at his neck, gladly saw him approach. He came to invite the stranger minstrel, to partake of their fare. Wallace did not appear to decline it; and as the court bard seemed rather devoted to the pleasures of wine, he found it not difficult to draw from him what he wanted to know. He learnt that young Bruce was still in the castle under arrest; 'and,' added the senachie, 'I shall feel no little mortification in being obliged, in the course of half an hour, to relinquish these festivities, for the gloomy duties of his apartment.'

This was precisely the point to which Wallace had wished to lead him; and pleading disrelish of wine, he offered to supply his place in the Earl's chamber. The half-intoxicated bard accepted the proposition with eagerness; and as the shades of night had long closed in, he conducted his illustrious substitute to the large round tower of the castle; informing him, as they went along, that he must continue playing in a recess adjoining to Bruce's room, till the last vesper-bell from the abbey in the neighbourhood, should give the signal for his laying aside the harp. By that time, the Earl would be fallen asleep, and he might then lie down on a pallet he would find in the recess.

All this, Wallace promised punctually to obey; and being conducted by the senachie up a spiral staircase, was left in the little ante-room. The chief drew the cowl of his minstrel cloak over his face, and set his harp before

[1] A senachie (or bard) was an indispensable appendage to rank, in every noble Scottish family. The senachie always slept in his lord's apartment.

him in order to play. He could see through its strings, that a group of knights were in earnest conversation at the further end of the apartment; but they spoke so low, he could not distinguish what was said. One of the party turned round; and the light of a suspended lamp, discovered him to be the brave Earl of Gloucester; whom Wallace had taken, and released at Berwick. The same ray, showed another to be Percy, Earl of Northumberland. Wallace found the strangeness of his situation. He, the conqueror of Edward, to have been singing as a mendicant in his halls; and having given laws to the two great men before him, he now sat in their view, unobserved and unfeared! Their figures concealed that of Bruce: but at last, when all rose together, he heard Gloucester say in rather an elevated voice, 'Keep up your spirits.—This envy of your base countrymen, must recoil upon themselves. It cannot be long, before King Edward discovers the motives of their accusations; and his noble nature, will acquit you accordingly.'

'My acquittal,' replied Bruce, in a firm tone, 'cannot restore what Edward's injustice has rifled from me. I abide by the test of my own actions; and by it, will open the door of my freedom. Your king may depend on it,' added he, with a sarcastic smile, 'that I am not a man to be influenced against the right. Where I owe duty, I will pay it to the uttermost farthing.'

Not apprehending the true meaning of this speech, Percy immediately answered, 'I believe you, and so must all the world: for did you not give brave proofs of it, that fearful night on the Carron, in bearing arms against the triumphant Wallace?'—'I did indeed give proofs of it,' returned Bruce, 'which I hope the world will one day know, by bearing arms against the usurper of my country's rights! and, in defiance of injustice, and of treason, before men and angels I swear,' cried he, 'to perform my duty to the end; to retrieve to honour, the insulted, the degraded name of Bruce!'

The two earls fell back before the vehement action which accompanied this burst from the soul of Bruce; and Wallace caught a glimpse of his youthful form, which stood pre-eminent in patriotic virtue between the Southron lords: his fine countenance glowed, and his brave spirit seemed to emanate in light from every part of his body. 'My prince and brother!' exclaimed Wallace to himself, ready to rush forward, and throw himself at his feet, or into his arms.

Gloucester, as little as Northumberland, comprehending Bruce's ambiguous declaration, replied, 'Let not your heart, my brave friend, burn too hotly against the King, for this arrest. He will be the more urgent, to obliterate, by kindness, this injustice, when he understands the aims of the Cummins. I have myself felt his misplaced wrath; and who now is more favoured by Edward, than Ralph de Monthermer? My case will be yours. Good night, Bruce. May propitious dreams, repeat the augury of your true friends!' Percy shook hands with the young earl, and the two English Lords left the room.

Wallace could now take a more leisurely survey of Bruce. He no longer wore the gay embroidered hacqueton; his tunic was black velvet, and all the rest of his garments accorded with the same mourning hue. Soon after the lords had quitted him, the buoyant elasticity of his figure, which before seemed ready to rise from the earth, so was his soul elevated by his sublime resolves, gave way to melancholy retrospections; and he threw himself into a chair, with his hands clasped upon his knee, and his eyes fixed in musing gaze upon the floor. It was now that Wallace touched the strings of his harp. The 'Death of Cuthullin' wailed from the sounding notes; but Bruce heard as though he heard them not: they soothed his mood, without his perceiving what it was that calmed, yet deepened, the saddening thoughts which possessed him. His posture remained the same; and sigh after sigh gave the only response to the strains of the bard.

Wallace grew impatient for the chimes of that vesper-bell, which, by assuring Bruce's attendants that he was gone to rest, would secure from interruption the conference he meditated. Two servants entered. Bruce, scarcely looking up, bade them withdraw; he should not need their attendance; he did not know when he should go to bed; and he desired to be no further disturbed. The men obeyed; and Wallace, changing the melancholy strain of his harp, struck the chords to the proud triumph he had played in the hall. Not one note of either ballad, had he yet sung to Bruce; but when he came to the passage in the latter, appropriated to these lines,—

> 'Arise, glory of Albin, from thy cloud,
> And shine upon thy own!'

he could not forbear giving the words, voice. Bruce started from his seat. He looked towards the minstrel—he walked the room in great disorder. The pealing sounds of the harp, and his own mental confusion, prevented his distinguishing that it was not the voice of his senachie. The words alone he heard; and they seemed a call, which his heart panted to obey. The hand of Wallace paused upon the instrument. He looked around, to see that observation was indeed at a distance. Not that he dreaded harm to himself; for his magnanimous mind, courageous from infancy, by a natural instinct had never known personal fear: but anxious not to precipitate Bruce into useless danger, he first satisfied himself that all was safe; and then—as the young Earl sat in a paroxysm of racking reflections (for they brought self-blame, or rather a blame on his father, which pierced him to the heart,)—Wallace slowly advanced from the recess. The agitated Bruce, accidentally raising his head, beheld a man in a minstrel's garb, much too tall to be his senachie, approaching him with a caution which he thought portended treachery. He sprang on his feet, and caught his sword from the table; but, in that moment, Wallace

threw off his cowl. Bruce stood gazing on him, stiffened with astonishment. Wallace, in a low voice, exclaimed, 'My prince! do you not know me?' Bruce, without speaking, threw his arms about his neck. He was silent, as he hung on him, but his tears flowed: he had much to say, but excess of emotion rendered it unutterable. As Wallace returned the fond embrace of friendship, he gently said, 'How is it, that I not only see you a close prisoner, but in these weeds?' Bruce at last forced himself to articulate: —'I have known misery, in all its forms, since we parted; but I have not power to name even my grief of griefs, while trembling at the peril to which you have exposed yourself, by seeking me! The vanquisher of Edward, the man who snatched Scotland from his grasp, were he known to be within these walls, would be a prize for which the boiling revenge of the tyrant would give half his kingdom! Think, then, my friend, how I shudder at this daring. I am surrounded by spies; and should you be discovered, Robert Bruce will then have the curses of his country, added to the judgments which already have fallen on his head.' As he spoke, they sat down together, and he continued:—'Before I answer your questions, tell me what immediate cause could bring you to seek the alien Bruce in prison, and by what stratagem you came in this disguise into my apartment? Tell me the last, that I may judge, by the means, of your present safety!'

Wallace briefly related the events which had sent him from Scotland, his rencontre with Piers Gaveston, and his arrangement with the senachie. To the first part of the narrative, Bruce listened with indignation. 'I knew,' exclaimed he, 'from the boastings of Athol and Buchan, that they had left in Scotland some dregs of their own refractory spirits; but I could not have guessed, that envy had so obliterated gratitude in the hearts of my countrymen. The wolves have now driven the shepherd from the fold,' cried he, 'and the flock will soon be devoured! Fatal was the hour for Scotland, and your friend,

when you yielded to the voice of faction; and relinquished the power which would have finally given peace to the nation!'

Wallace recapitulated his reasons for having refrained from forcing the obedience of the young Lord Badenoch and his adherents; for abdicating a dignity, he could no longer maintain without shedding the blood of the misguided men who opposed him. Bruce acknowledged the wisdom of this conduct; but could not restrain his animadversions on the characters of the Cummins. He told Wallace, that he had met the two sons of the late Lord Badenoch in Guienne; that James, who now pretended such resentment of his father's death, had ever been a rebellious son. John, who yet remained in France, appeared of a less violent temper; 'but,' added the prince, 'I have been taught by one, who will never counsel me more, that all the Cummins, male and female, would be ready at any time to sacrifice earth and heaven to their ambition. It is to Buchan, and Athol, that I owe my prolonged confinement; and to them I may date the premature death of my father.'

The start of Wallace, declared his shock at this information. 'How!' exclaimed he: 'The Earl of Carrick dead? Fell, fell assassins of their country!' The swelling emotions of his soul, would not allow him to proceed, and Bruce resumed:—'It is for him, I wear these sable garments,—poor emblems of the mournings of my soul; mournings, not so much for his loss, (and that is grievous, as ever son bore,) but because he lived not, to let the world know, what he really was; he lived not to bring into light, his long-obscured honour!—There, there, Wallace, is the bitterness of this cup to me!'

'But can you not sweeten it, my dear prince,' cried Wallace, 'by retrieving all that he was cut off from redeeming? To open the way to you, I come.'—'And I will enter, where you point;' returned Bruce; 'but heavy is my woe, that, knowing the same spirit was in my

father's bosom, he should be torn from the opportunity to make it manifest: O Wallace! that he should be made to lie down in a dishonoured grave! Had he lived, my friend, he would have brightened that name, which rumour has sullied; and I should have doubly gloried, in wearing the name which he had rendered so worthy of being coupled with the kingly title. Noble was he in soul; but he fell amidst a race of men whose art was equal to their venality, and he became their dupe. Betrayed by friendship, he sunk into the snare; for he had no dishonour in his own breast, to warn him of what might be the villainy of others. He believed the cajoling speeches of Edward; who, on the first offense of Baliol, had promised to place my father on the throne. Month after month passed away, and the engagement was unperformed. The disturbances on the Continent, seemed, to his confiding nature, a sufficient excuse for these various delays; and he waited in quiet expectation, till your name, my friend, rose glorious in Scotland. My father and myself were then in Guienne. Edward persuaded him, that you affected the crown; and he returned with that deceiver, to draw his sword against his people, and their ambitious idol; for so he believed you to be; and grievous has been the expiation of that fatal hour!—Your conference with him on the banks of the Carron, opened his eyes; he saw what his credulity had made Scotland suffer; what a wreck he had made of his own fame; and, from that moment, he resolved to follow another course. But the habit of trusting the affection of Edward, inclined him rather to remonstrate on his rights, than immediately to take up arms against him; yet, resolved not to strike a second blow on his people; when you assailed the Southron camp, he withdrew his few remaining followers who had survived the hard-fought day of Falkirk, into a remote defile. On quitting you, I came up with him in Mid-Lothian; and never having missed me from the camp, he concluded that I

had appeared thus late, from having kept in the rear of the division.'

Bruce now proceeded to narrate to Wallace, the particulars of his father's meeting with the King at Durham. Instead of that monarch receiving the Earl of Carrick with his wonted familiar welcome, he turned coldly from him when he approached; and suffered him to take his usual seat at the royal table, without deigning him the slightest notice. Young Bruce was absent from the banquet; having determined never to mingle again in social communion with the man whom he now regarded as the usurper of his father's rights. The absence of the filial eye, which had once looked the insolent Buchan into his inherent insignificance, now emboldened the audacity of this enemy of the house of Carrick; and, supported by Athol on the one side, and Soulis on the other, the base voluptuary seized a pause in the conversation, (that he might draw the attention of all present, to the disgrace of the chief,) and said, with affected carelessness,—'My Lord of Carrick, to-day you dine with clean hands: the last time I saw you at meat, they were garnished with your own blood!' The Earl turned on him a look, which asked him to explain. Lord Buchan laughed, and continued;—'When we last met at table, was it not in his Majesty's tent, after the victory at Falkirk? You were then red from the slaughter of those bastardised people, to whom, I understand, you now give the fondling appellation of sons! Having recognised the relationship, it was not probable we should again see your hands in their former brave livery; and their present pallid hue convinces, more than myself, of the truth of our information.'

'And me,' cried Edward, rising on the couch, to which his wounds confined him, 'that I have discovered a traitor!—You fled, Lord Carrick, at the first attack which the Scots made on my camp; and you drew thousands after you. I know you too well, to believe that cowardice

impelled the motion. It was treachery, accursed treachery, to your friend and king; and you shall feel the weight of his resentment!'—'To this hour, King Edward,' replied the Earl, starting from his chair, 'I have been more faithful to you, than to my country, or my God! I heard, saw, and believed, only what you determined; and I became your slave; your vile, oppressed slave!—The victim of your artifice!—How often have you pledged yourself, that you fought in Scotland, only for my advantage! I gave my faith, and my power to you; and how often have you promised, after the next successful battle, to restore me to the crown of my ancestors! I still believed you; and I still engaged all, who yet acknowledged the influence of Bruce, to support your name in Scotland. Was not such, the reiterated promise, by which you allured me to the field of Falkirk?—And when I had covered myself, as the Lord Buchan too truly says, with the blood of my children; when I asked my friend, for the crown I had served for, what was his answer? "Have I nought to do, but to win kingdoms, to make gifts of?" Thus, then, did a king, a friend, break his often-repeated word! What wonder, then, that I should feel the indignation of a prince, and a friend; and leave the false, alas! the perjured!—to defenders, whom he seemed more highly to approve? But of treachery, what have I shown? Rather confidence, King Edward! and the confidence that was awakened in the fields of Palestine, brought me hither to-day to remonstrate with you on my rights; when, by throwing myself into the arms of my people, I might have demanded them at the head of a victorious army.'

Edward, who had been prepared by the Cummins, to discredit all that Carrick might say in his defence, turned with a look of contempt towards him, and said, 'You have been persuaded, to act like a madman: and, as maniacs, both yourself, and your son, shall be guarded; till I have leisure to consider any rational evidence you may in future offer in your vindication.'—'And is this

the manner, King Edward, that you treat your friend? once your preserver!'—'The vassal,' replied Edward, 'who presumes upon the condescension of his prince, and acts as if he were really his equal, ought to meet the punishment due to such arrogance. You saved my life on the walls of Acre; but you owed that duty to the son of your liege lord. In the fervour of youth, I inconsiderately rewarded you with my friendship; and the return, is treason.' As he concluded, he turned from Lord Carrick; and the marshals immediately seizing the Earl, took him to the keep of the castle.[1]

His son, who had been sought in the Carrick quarters, and laid under an arrest, met his father in the guard-chamber. Carrick could not speak; but motioning to be conducted to the place appointed for his prison, the men, with equal silence, led him through a range of apartments which occupied the middle story, and stopping in the furthest, left him there with his son. Bruce was not surprised at his own arrest; but at that of his father, he stood in speechless astonishment until the guards withdrew; then, seeing Lord Carrick, with a changing countenance throw himself on the bed (for it was in his sleeping room they had left him), he exclaimed, 'What is the meaning of this, my father? Has any charge against me, brought suspicion on you?'—'No, Robert, no,' replied the Earl: 'it is I who have brought you into this prison, and into disgrace; disgrace with all the world, for having tacitly surrendered my inheritance to the invader of my country. Honest men abhor, villains treat me with contumely: and he for whom I incurred all this, because I would not, when my eyes were opened to my sin, again imbrue my hands in the blood of my country, Edward thrusts me from him! You are implicated in my crime; and, for not joining the Southrons, to repel the Scots from the royal camp, we are both prisoners!'

[1]These speeches are historically true; as is also Edward's after-treatment of the Earl of Carrick.—(1809.)

'Then,' replied Bruce, 'he shall feel, that you have a son who has virtue to be what he suspects; and, from this hour, I proclaim eternal enmity to the betrayer of my father; to the ingrate, who embraced you, to destroy!'

The indignation of the youthful prince, wrought him to so vehement a declaration of resolute and immediate hostility, that Lord Carrick was obliged to give his transports way; but when he saw that his denunciations were exhausted, though not the determined purpose of his soul, (for he trod the room with a step, which seemed to shake its foundations, with the power of his mighty mind;) Carrick gazed on him with pride, yet grief; and, sighing heavily, called him to approach him. 'Come to me, my Robert!' said he; 'hear, and abide by the last injunctions of your father; for, from this bed, I may never rise more. A too late sense of the injuries, my sanction has doubled on the people I was born to protect; and the ingratitude of him, for whom I have offended my God, and wronged my country; have broken my heart. I shall die, Robert, but you will avenge me!'—'May God so prosper me!' cried Bruce, raising his arms to heaven. Carrick resumed: —'Attend to me, my dear and brave son, and do not mistake the nature of my last wish. Do not allow the, perhaps, too forcible word I have used, to hurry you into any personal revenge on Edward. Let him live, to feel and to regret the outrages he has committed on the peace and honour of his too faithful friend. Pierce him on the side of his ambition; there he is vulnerable; and there you will heal, while you wound. This would be my revenge, dear Robert; that you should one day have his life in your power; and in memory of what I now say, spare it. When I am gone, think not of private resentment. Let your aim be, the recovery of the kingdom which Edward rifled from your fathers. Join the virtuous and triumphant Wallace. Tell him, of my remorse, of my fate; and be guided wholly by his counsels. To ensure the success of this enterprise, my son;—a success to which I look, as to the only means

of redeeming the name I have lost; and of inspiring my separated spirit, with courage to meet the freeborn souls of my ancestors;—urge not your own destruction, by any premature disclosure of your resolutions. For my sake, and for your country's, suppress your resentment; threaten not the King of England; provoke not the unworthy Scottish lords, who have gained his ear;—but bury all in your own bosom, till you can join Wallace. Then, by his arm, and your own, seat yourself firmly in the throne of your fathers. That moment, will sufficiently avenge me on Edward!—and in that moment, Robert! or at least as soon as circumstances can allow, let the English ground which will then hold my body, give up its dead! Remove me to a Scottish grave: and, standing over my ashes, proclaim to them who might have been my people, that for every evil I suffered to fall on Scotland, I have since felt answering pangs; and that, dying, I beg their forgiveness; and bequeath them my best blessing, —my virtuous son, to reign in my stead!'

These injunctions, to assert his own honour, and that of his father, were readily sworn to by Bruce; but he could not so easily be made to quell the imperious indignation which was precipitating him to an immediate and loud revenge. The dying Earl trembled before the overwhelming passion of his son's wrath and grief. Treated with outrage and contumely, he saw his father stricken to the earth before him, and he could not bear to hear of any temporising with his murderers. But all this tempest of the soul, the wisdom-inspired arguments of the Earl at last becalmed, though could not subdue. He convinced his son's reason, by showing him, that caution would ensure the blow; and that his aim could only be effected, by remaining silent, till he could publish his father's honour, evidenced by his own heroism. 'Do this,' added Carrick, 'and I shall live fair in the memories of men. But be violent, threaten Edward from these walls, menace the wretches who have trodden on the grey hairs of their

prince, and your voice will be heard no more: this ground will drink your blood; and blindly-judging infamy, will for ever after point to our obscure graves!'

Such persuasives at last prevailed with Bruce; and, next day, writing the hasty lines which Wallace received at Falkirk, he intrusted them to his senachie; who conveyed them to Scotland, by means of the shepherd youth.

Shortly after the despatch of this letter, the presage of Lord Carrick was verified; he was seized in the night with spasms, and died in the arms of his son.

When Bruce related these particulars, his grief and indignation became so violent, that Wallace was obliged to enforce the dying injunctions of the father he thus vehemently deplored, to moderate the delirium of his soul. 'Ah!' exclaimed the young Earl, 'I have indeed needed some friend to save me from myself; some one to reconcile me to the Robert Bruce, who has so long slept in the fatal delusions which poisoned his father, and laid him low! Oh! Wallace! at times I am mad. I know not whether this forbearance be not cowardice. I doubt whether my father meant what he spoke; that he did not yet seek to preserve the life of his son, at the expense of his honour: and I have been ready to precipitate myself on the steel of Edward, so that he should but meet the point of mine!'

Bruce then added, that in his more rational meditations, he had resolved to attempt an escape in the course of a few days. He understood that a deputation of English barons, seeking a ratification of their charter, were soon to arrive in Durham; the bustle attendant on their business, would, he hoped, draw attention from him, and afford him the opportunity he sought. 'In that case,' continued he, 'I should have made directly to Stirling; and, had not Providence conducted you to me, I might have unconsciously thrown myself into the midst of enemies. James Cummins is too ambitious, to have allowed my life to pass unattempted.'

Whilst he was yet speaking, the door of the chamber burst open, and Bruce's two attendants rushed into the room with looks aghast. Bruce and Wallace started on their feet, and laid their hands on their swords. But instead of anything hostile appearing behind the servants, the inebriated figure of the senachie staggered forward. The men, hardly awake, stood staring and trembling, and looking from the senachie to Wallace; at last one, extricating his terror-struck tongue, and falling on his knees, exclaimed, 'Blessed St. Andrew! here is the senachie and his wraith.'[1] Bruce perceived the mistake of his servants; and explaining to them, that a travelling minstrel had obliged the senachie by performing his duty, he bade them retire to rest, and think no more of their alarm.

The intoxicated bard threw himself without ceremony on his pallet in the recess; and the servants, though convinced, still shaking with superstitious fright, entreated permission to bring their heather beds into their lord's chamber. To deny them was impossible; and all further converse with Wallace that night being put an end to, a couch was laid for him in an interior apartment; and with a grateful pressure of the hands, in which their hearts silently embraced, the chiefs separated to repose.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE BISHOP'S PALACE

The second matin-bell sounded from the abbey, before the eyes of Wallace opened from the deep sleep which had sealed them. A bath refreshed him from every toil: then renewing the stain on his face and hands, with the juice of a nut which he carried about him; and once more covering

[1] It is a superstition with the lower orders in the north, that when a man is going to die, some of his friends see his apparition, which they call his *wraith*, and they say it often appears in the presence of the doomed person.

his martial figure, and golden hair, with the minstrel's cassock and cowl, he rejoined his friend.

Bruce had previously affected to consider the senachie as still disordered by his last night's excess; and ordering him from his presence for at least a day, commanded that the travelling minstrel should be summoned to supply his place.

The table was spread when Wallace entered, and several servants were in attendance. Bruce hastily rose, and would have embraced him; so did his comforted heart spring to meet his friend; but before these people, it would have been more than imprudent; and hailing him, with only one of his love-beaming looks, he made a sign to him to take his place at a board near his own. To prevent suspicion in the attendants (some of whom might be spies of Edward's), during the repast he discoursed with Wallace on subjects relative to northern literature; repeating, indeed, many passages apposite to his own heroic sentiments, from Ossian and other Scottish bards.

It was then settled between the friends, that when it became dark, they should dress themselves in the confessor's robes; and by means of the Queen's signet, which she had given to Wallace at the banquet, pass the guard as priests who had entered by some other gate, and were returned from shriving her Majesty. Once without the city, they could make a swift progress southward, to the nearest sea-port; and there safely embark for France. For they were well aware, that the moment they were missed, suspicion would direct pursuit towards the Scottish borders.

In these arrangements, and in planning their future movements relative to the rescue of Lady Helen, they passed several hours; and were only interrupted by the arrival of a lute from the Queen, for her minstrel to tune. Wallace obeyed; and returning it by the page who brought it, congratulated himself that it was not accompanied by any new summons. Then continuing his discourse with

Bruce, on the past, present, and to come; their souls grew more closely entwined, as they more intimately recognised their kindred natures; and time moved on, unmarked, till the shadows of evening deepened into night.

'Now is our hour,' cried Bruce, starting on his feet: 'go you into that room, and array yourself in the confessor's robes, while I call my servants, to dispense with their usual nightly attendance.'—With determination, and hope, Wallace gladly obeyed. In that very same instant, the Earl of Gloucester suddenly entered, and looking around the room with a disturbed countenance, abruptly said, 'Where is the minstrel?'—'Why?' answered Bruce, with an alarm, which he vainly tried to prevent appearing in his face. Gloucester advanced close to him: 'Is any one within hearing?'—'No one.'—'Then,' replied the Earl, 'his life is in danger. He is suspected to be, not what he seems.'

Bruce was so confounded with this stoppage of all their plans, and at the imminent peril of Wallace, that he could not speak. Gloucester proceeded: 'My dear Bruce, from the circumstance of his being with you, I cannot but suppose that you know more of him than you think proper to disclose. Whoever he may be, whether he came from France, or really from Scotland as he says, his life is now forfeited. And, that by attempting to screen him, you may not seem to share his imputed guilt, I come to warn you of this discovery. A double guard is set around the keep; so no visible means are left for his escape.'

'Then what will become of him?' exclaimed Bruce, forgetting all caution, in dismay for his friend. 'Am I to see the bravest of men, the saviour of my country, butchered before my eyes by a tyrant?—I may die, Gloucester, in his defence, but I will never surrender him to his enemy!'

Gloucester stood aghast, at this disclosure. He came to accuse the friend of Bruce, that Bruce might be prepared to clear himself of connivance with so treasonable a

crime; but now that he found this friend to be Wallace, the preserver of his own life, the restorer of his honour at Berwick, he immediately resolved to give him freedom. 'Bruce,' cried he, 'when I recollect the figure and deportment of this minstrel, I am surprised that, in spite of his disguise, I did not recognise the invincible Regent of Scotland; but, now I know him, he shall find that generosity is not confined to his own breast. Give me your word, that you will not stimulate suspicion, by remonstrating with Edward against your own arrest, till the court leaves Durham; and I will instantly find a way to conduct your friend in safety from the castle.'—'I pledge you my word of honour,' cried Bruce, 'release but him; and, if you demand it of me, I would die in chains.'—'He saved me at Berwick,' replied Gloucester, 'and I am anxious to repay the debt. If he be near, explain what has happened, in as few words as possible; for we must not delay a moment. I left a council with the enraged King, settling what horrible death was to be his punishment.'—'When he is safe,' answered Bruce, 'I will attest his innocence to you; meanwhile, rely on my faith, that you are giving liberty to a guiltless man.'

Bruce hastened to Wallace, who had just completed his disguise. He briefly related what had passed; and received for answer, that he would not leave his prince to the revenge of the tyrant. But Bruce, urging that the escape of the one, could alone secure that of the other, implored him not to persist in refusing his offered safety, but to make direct for Normandy. 'I will join you at Rouen; and thence we can proceed to Guienne,' added he: 'The hour the Court leaves Durham, is that of my escape; and when free, what shall divide me from you and our enterprise!'

Wallace had hardly assented, when a tumultuous noise broke the silence of the court-yard; the great iron doors of the keep were thrown back on their hinges, and the clangour of arms, with many voices, resounded in the hall.

Thinking all was lost, with a cry of despair, Bruce drew his sword, and threw himself before his friend. At that instant Gloucester entered the room: 'They are quicker than I thought!' cried he; 'but follow me.—Bruce, remain where you are: sheath your sword—be bold; deny you know anything of the minstrel, and all will be well.' As he spoke, the feet of them who were come to seize Wallace, already sounded in the adjoining apartment. Gloucester grasped the Scottish hero by the hand, turned into a short gallery, and plucking the broad shaft of a cedar pilaster from under its capital, let himself and his companion into a passage within the wall of the building. The ponderous beam closed after them, into its former situation; and the silent pair descended, by a long flight of stone steps, to a square dungeon without any visible outlet; but the Earl found one, by raising a flat stone marked with an elevated cross; and again they penetrated lower into the bosom of the earth by a gradually declining path, till they stopped on a subterranean level ground. 'This vaulted passage,' said Gloucester, 'reaches, in a direct line, to Fincklay abbey. A particular circumstance constrained my uncle, the then abbot of that monastery, to discover it to me, ten years ago. He told me, that to none but to the bishops of Durham, and the abbots of Fincklay, was the secret of its existence revealed. Since my coming hither this time (which was to escort the young Queen,—not to bear arms against Scotland), I one day took it into my head to revisit this recess; and, happily for the gratitude I owe to you, I found all as I had left it in my uncle's lifetime. But for the sake of my honour with Edward, whose wrath would fall upon me in the most fearful shapes should he ever know that I delivered his vanquisher out of his hands, I must enjoin you to secrecy. Though the enemy of my King's ambition, you are the friend of mankind. You were my benefactor, noble Wallace; and I should deserve the rack, could I suffer one hair of your head to fall with violence to the ground.'

During this discourse they passed on through the vaulted passage, till arriving at a wooden crucifix which marked the boundary of the domain of Durham, Gloucester stopped:—'I must not go further. Should I prolong my stay from the castle during the search for you, suspicion may be awakened. You must therefore proceed alone.—Go straight forward; and, at the extremity of the vault, you will find a flag-stone surmounted like the one by which we descended; raise it, and it will let you into the cemetery of the abbey of Fincklay. One end of that burying-place is always open to the east. Thence you will emerge to the open world; and may it in future, noble Wallace, ever treat you according to your unequalled merits. Farewell!'

The Earl turned to retrace his steps; and Wallace pursued his way through the rayless darkness, towards the Fincklay extremity of the vault.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

GALLIC SEAS

Wallace, having issued from his subterranean journey, made direct to Sunderland, where he arrived about sunrise. A vessel belonging to France (which, since the marriage of Margaret with Edward, had been in amity with England as well as Scotland) rode there, waiting a favourable wind. Wallace secured a passage in her.

The ship weighed anchor, cleared the harbour; and, under a fair sky, swiftly cut the waves towards the Gallic shores. But ere she reached them, the warlike star of Wallace directed to his little bark, the terrific sails of the Red Reaver, a formidable pirate who then infested the Gallic seas, swept their commerce, and insulted their navy. He attacked the French vessel; but it carried a greater than Cæsar and his fortunes: Wallace and his destiny were there—and the enemy struck to the Scottish

chief. The Red Reaver, (so surnamed because of his red sails, and sanguinary deeds,) was killed in the action; but his younger brother, Thomas de Longueville, was found alive within the captive ship; and a yet greater prize! Prince Louis of France; who having been out the day before on a sailing party, had been descried, and seized as an invaluable booty, by the Red Reaver.

Adverse winds for some time prevented Wallace from reaching port with his capture; but on the fourth day after the victory, he cast anchor in the harbour of Havre. The indisposition of the Prince, from a wound he had received in his own conflict with the Reaver, made it necessary to apprise King Philip of the accident. In answer to Wallace's despatches on this subject, the grateful monarch added to the proffers of personal friendship, which had been the substance of his Majesty's embassy to Scotland, a pressing invitation, that the Scottish chief would accompany the Prince to Paris; and there receive a public mark of royal gratitude, which, with due honour should record this service done to France, to future ages. Meanwhile Philip sent the chief a suit of armour, with a request that he would wear it in remembrance of France and his own heroism. But nothing could tempt Wallace to turn aside from his duty. Impatient to pursue his journey towards the spot where he hoped to meet Bruce, he wrote a respectful excuse to the King: but arraying himself in the monarch's martial present, (to assure his Majesty by the evidence of his son, that his royal wish had been so far obeyed;) he went to the Prince to bid him farewell. Louis was preparing for their departure, all three together, with young De Longueville; (whose pardon Wallace had obtained from the King, on account of the youth's abhorrence of the service, which his brother had compelled him to adopt:)—and the two young men, from different feelings, expressed their disappointment, when they found that their benefactor was going to leave them. Wallace gave his Highness a packet for the King; containing a

brief statement of his vow to Lord Mar; and a promise, that when he had fulfilled it, Philip should see him at Paris. The royal cavalcade then separated from the deliverer of its Prince; and Wallace, mounting a richly barbed Arabian, which had accompanied his splendid armour, took the road to Rouen.

Meanwhile events not less momentous, took place at Durham. The instant Wallace had followed the Earl of Gloucester from the apartment in the castle, it was entered by Sir Piers Gaveston. He demanded the minstrel. Bruce replied, he knew not where he was. Gaveston, eager to convince the King that he was no accomplice, with the suspected person, put the question a second time, and in a tone which he meant should intimidate the Scottish Prince; 'Where is the minstrel?'—'I know not,' replied Bruce.—'And will you dare to tell me, Earl,' asked his interrogator, 'that within this quarter of an hour, he has not been in this tower? nay, in this very room? —The guards in your antechamber, have told me that he was:—and can Lord Carrick stoop to utter a falsehood to screen a wandering beggar?'

Bruce was more closely immured than ever. Not even his senachie was allowed to approach him; and double guards were kept constantly around his prison. On the fourth day of his seclusion, an extra row of iron bars was put across his windows. He asked the captain of the party, the reason for this new rivet on his captivity; but he received no answer. Bruce was not to be deprived of hope, and smiling, said—'There are more ways of getting out of a tyrant's prison, than by the doors and windows!'—'Why, you would not eat through the walls!' cried the man.—'Certainly,' replied Bruce, 'if I have no other way; and through the guards too.'—'We'll see to that,' answered the man.—'And feel it too, my sturdy gaoler,' returned the Prince; 'so look to yourself.' Bruce threw himself recklessly into a chair as he spoke; while the man, eyeing him askance, and remembering how strangely the minstrel

had disappeared, began to think that some people, born in Scotland, inherited from nature a necromantic power of executing whatever they determined.

Though careless in his manner of treating the warder's information, Bruce thought of it with anxiety; and lost in reflections, chequered with hope and doubt of his ever effecting an escape, he remained immovable on the spot where the man had left him, till another sentinel brought in a lamp. He set it down in silence, and withdrew: Bruce then heard the bolts on the outside of his chamber pushed into their guards.—'There they go,' said he to himself; 'and those are to be the morning and evening sounds to which I am to listen all my days! At least, Edward would have it so.'

While invocations to the Power in which he confided, and resolutions respecting the consequences of his hoped-for liberty, by turns occupied his mind, he heard the tread of a foot in the adjoining passage. He listened, breathless; for no living creature, he thought, could be in that quarter of the building; as he had suffered none to enter it, since Wallace had disappeared by that way. He half rose from his couch, as the door, at which he had seen him last, gently opened. He started up, and Gloucester with a lantern in his hand stood before him. The Earl put his finger on his lip, and taking Bruce by the hand, led him, as he had done Wallace, down into the vault which leads to Fincklay abbey.

When safe in that subterraneous cloister, the Earl replied to the impatient gratitude of Bruce (who saw that the generous Gloucester meant he should follow the steps of his friend;) by giving him a succinct account of his motives for changing his first determination, and now giving him liberty. He had not visited Bruce since the escape of Wallace, that he might not excite any new suspicion in Edward; and the tower being fast locked at every usual avenue, he had now entered it from the Fincklay side.

Having led him in safety through the vaulted passage, they parted in the cemetery of Fincklay; Gloucester to walk back to Durham, by the banks of the Wear; and Bruce, to mount the horse the good Earl had left tied to a tree, to convey him to Hartlepool. There he embarked for Normandy.

When he arrived at Caen, he made no delay; but taking a rapid course across the country towards Rouen, on the second evening of his travelling, having pursued his route without sleep, he felt himself so overcome with fatigue, that in the midst of a vast and dreary plain, he found it necessary to stop for rest at the first habitation he might find. It happened to be the abode of one of those poor, but pious matrons, who, attaching themselves to some neighbouring order of charity, live alone in desert places, for the purpose of succouring distressed travellers. Here, Bruce found the widow's cruse, and a pallet to repose his wearied limbs.

CHAPTER XXXIX

NORMANDY

Wallace, having separated from the Prince Royal of France, pursued his solitary way towards the capital of Normandy, till night overtook him ere he was aware. Clouds so obscured the sky, that not a star was visible; and his horse, terrified at the impenetrable darkness, and the difficulties of the path, which lay over a barren and stony moor, suddenly stopped. This aroused Wallace from a long fit of musing, to look around him. But on which side lay the road to Rouen, he could form no guess. To pass the night in so exposed a spot, might be dangerous; and spurring the animal, he determined to push onward.

He had ridden nearly another hour, when the dead silence of the scene was broken by the roll of distant

thunder. Then forked lightning shooting from the horizon, showed a line of country unmarked by any vestige of human habitation. Still he proceeded. The storm approached; till breaking in peals over his head, it discharged such sheets of livid fire at his feet, that the horse reared; and plunging amidst the blaze, flashed the light of his rider's armour, on the eyes of a troop of horsemen, who also stood under the tempest, gazing with affright at the scene. Wallace, by the same transitory illumination, saw the travellers, as they seemed to start back at his appearance; and, mistaking their apprehension, he called to them, that his well-managed, though terrified steed, would do theirs no harm. One of them advanced, and respectfully inquired of him the way to Rouen. Wallace replied, that he was a stranger in this part of the country; and was also seeking that city. While he was yet speaking, the thunder became more tremendous; and the lightning rolling in volumes along the ground, the horses of the troop became restive; and one of them threw its rider. Cries of lamentation, mingling with the groans of the fallen person, excited the compassion of Wallace. He rode towards the spot whence the latter proceeded, and asked the nearest bystander (for several had alighted) whether the unfortunate man were much hurt. The answer returned was full of alarm for the sufferer, and anxiety to obtain some place of shelter; for rain began to fall. In a few minutes it increased to torrents; and the lightning ceasing, deepened the horrors of the scene, by preventing the likelihood of discovering any human abode. The men gathered round their fallen companion, bewailing the prospect of his perishing under these inclemencies; but Wallace cheered them, by saying he would seek a shelter for their friend, and blow his bugle when he had found one. With the word, he turned his horse, and as he galloped along, called aloud on any Christian man who might live near, to open his doors to a dying traveller! After riding about in all directions, he saw a glimmering light for a moment, and

then all was darkness; but again he cried aloud for charity! and a shrill female voice answered, 'I am a lone woman, with already one poor traveller in my house; but, for the Virgin's sake, I will open my door to you, whatever you may be.' The good woman relit her lamp, which the rain had extinguished; and on her unlatching her door, Wallace briefly related what had happened; entreating her permission to bring the unfortunate person into the cottage. She readily consented; and giving him a lantern to guide his way, he blew his bugle; which was instantly answered by so glad, and loud a shout, that it assured him his companions could not be far distant; and that he must have made many a useless circuit, before he had stopped at this charitable door.

The men directed him through the darkness by their voices; for the lantern threw its beams but a very little way; and arriving at their side, by his assistance the bruised traveller was brought to the cottage. It was a poor hovel: but the good woman had spread a clean woollen coverlet over her own bed, in the inner chamber; and thither Wallace carried the invalid. He seemed in great pain; but his kind conductor answered their hostess's inquiries respecting him, with a belief that no bones were broken. 'But yet,' cried she, 'sad may be the effects of internal bruises, on so emaciated a frame. I will venture to disturb my other guest, who sleeps in the loft, and bring down a decoction that I keep there. It is made from simple herbs, and I am sure will be of service.'

The old woman having showed to the attendants, where they might put their horses under shelter of a shed which projected from the cottage, ascended a few steps to the chamber above. Meanwhile the Scottish chief, assisted by one of the men, disengaged the sufferer from his wet garments, and covered him with the blankets of the bed. Recovered to recollection, by the comparative comfort of his bodily feelings, the stranger opened his eyes. He fixed them on Wallace, then looked around, and

turned to Wallace again. 'Generous knight!' cried he, 'I have nothing but thanks to offer for this kindness. You seem to be of the highest rank, and yet have succoured one whom the world abjures!' The knight returned a courteous answer, and the invalid in a paroxysm of emotion added, 'Can it be possible, that a prince of France has dared to act thus contrary to his peers?'

Wallace not apprehending what had given rise to this question, supposed the stranger's wits were disordered; and looked with that inquiry towards the attendant. Just at that moment a step, more active than that of their aged hostess, sounded above; and an exclamation of surprise followed it, in a voice that startled Wallace. He turned hastily round, and a young man sprang from the cottage stairs into the apartment; joy danced in every feature; and the ejaculation, 'Wallace!'—'Bruce!' burst at once from the hearts of the two friends as they rushed into each other's arms. All else present were lost to them, in the delight of meeting after so perilous a separation; a delight not confined for its object to their individual selves; each saw in the other the hope of Scotland; and when they embraced, it was not merely with the ardour of friendship, but with that of patriotism, rejoicing in the preservation of its chief dependence. While the chiefs freely spoke in their native tongue, before a people who could not be supposed to understand them, the aged stranger on the bed reiterated his moans. Wallace, in a few words telling Bruce the manner of his rencontre with the sick man, and his belief, that he was disordered in his mind, drew towards the bed, and offered him some of the decoction which the woman now brought. The invalid drank it, and gazed earnestly first on Wallace, and then on Bruce. 'Pierre, withdraw,' cried he to his personal attendant.—The man obeyed. 'Sit down by me, noble friends,' said he to the Scottish chiefs, 'and read a lesson, which I pray ye lay to your hearts!' Bruce glanced a look at Wallace, that declared he was of his opinion. Wallace

drew a stool, while his friend seated himself on the bed. The old woman perceiving something extraordinary in the countenance of the bruised stranger, thought he was going to reveal some secret heavy on his mind, and also withdrew.

'You think my intellects are injured,' resumed he, turning to Wallace, 'because I addressed you as one of the house of Philip! Those jewelled lilies round your helmet, led me into the error: I never before saw them granted to other than a prince of the blood. But think not, brave man, I respect you less, since I have discovered that you are not of the race of Philip, that you are other than a prince!—Look on me,—at this emaciated form, and behold the reverses of all earthly grandeur! This palsied hand once held a sceptre; these hollow temples were once bound with a crown!—He that used to be followed as the source of honour, as the fountain of prosperity; with suppliants at his feet, and flatterers at his side, would now be left to solitude, were it not for these few faithful servants, who, in spite of all changes, have preserved their allegiance to the end. Look on me, chiefs, and behold him who was the King of Scots.'

At this declaration, both Wallace and Bruce, struck with surprise and compassion at meeting their ancient enemy reduced to such abject misery, with one impulse bowed their heads to him with an air of reverence. The action penetrated the heart of Baliol. For when, at the meeting and mutual exclamation of the two friends, he recognised in whose presence he lay, he fearfully remembered that by his base submissions turning the scale of judgment in his favour, he had defrauded the grandsire of the very Bruce now before him, of a fair decision on his rights to the crown! and when he looked on Wallace, who had preserved him from the effects of his accident, and brought him to a shelter from the raging terrors of the night, his conscience doubly smote him! for from the hour of his elevation, to that of his downfall, he had ever persecuted

the family of Wallace; and, at the hour which was the crisis of her fate, had denied them the right of drawing their swords in the defence of Scotland. He, her king, had resigned her into the hands of an usurper; but Wallace, the injured Wallace, had arisen, like a star of light on the deep darkness of her captivity, and Scotland was once more free. In the tempest, the exiled monarch had started at the blaze of the unknown knight's jewelled panoply! at the declaration of his name, he shrunk before the brightness of his glory!—and falling back on the bed, had groaned aloud. To these young men, so strangely brought before him, and both of whom he had wronged, he determined immediately to reveal himself; and see whether they were equally resentful of injuries; as those he had served, had proved ungrateful for benefits received. He spoke: and when, instead of seeing the pair rise in indignation on his pronouncing his name, they bowed their heads, and sat in respectful silence; his desolate heart expanded at once, to admit the long-estranged emotion, and he burst into tears. He caught the hand of Bruce, who sat nearest to him, and stretching out the other to Wallace, exclaimed, 'I have not deserved this goodness from either of you. Perhaps, you two are the only men now living, whom I ever greatly injured; and you, excepting my four poor attendants, are perhaps the only men living, who would compassionate my misfortunes!'

'These are lessons, King,' returned Wallace with reverence, 'to fit you for a better crown. And never in my eyes, did the descendant of Alexander seem so worthy of his blood!' The grateful monarch pressed his hand.—Bruce continued to gaze on him, with a thousand awful thoughts occupying his mind. Baliol read in his expressive countenance, the reflections which chained his tongue. 'Behold, how low is laid the proud rival of your grandfather!' exclaimed he, turning to Bruce. 'I compassed a throne, I could not fill. I mistook the robes, the homage, for the

kingly dignity. I bartered the liberties of my country, for a crown I knew not how to wear; and the insidious trafficker, not only reclaimed it, but repaid me with a prison. There, I expiated my crime against the upright Bruce! Not one of all the Scottish lords, who crowded Edward's court, came to beguile a moment of sorrow, from their captive monarch.—Lonely I lived; for the tyrant even deprived me of the comfort of seeing my fellow-prisoner, Lord Douglas; he, whom attachment to my true interests, had betrayed to an English prison. I never saw him after the day of his being put into the Tower, until that of his death.'—Wallace interrupted the afflicted Baliol, with an exclamation of surprise. 'Yes,' added he, 'I myself closed his eyes. At that awful hour, he had petitioned to see me, and the boon was granted. I went to him; and then, with his dying breath, he spoke truths to me, which were indeed messengers from heaven! they taught me what I was, and what I might be. He died. Edward was then in Flanders; and you, brave Wallace, being triumphant in Scotland, and laying such a stress in your negotiations for the return of Douglas, the Southron cabinet agreed to conceal his death; and by making his name an instrument to excite your hopes and fears, turn your anxiety for him to their own advantage.'

A deep scarlet kindled over the face of Bruce:—'With what a race have I been so long connected!—what mean subterfuges, what dastardly deceits, for the leaders of a great nation to adopt!—Oh, king!' exclaimed he, turning to Baliol, 'if you have errors to atone for, what then must be the penalty of my sin, for holding so long with an enemy, as vile as he is ambitious!—Scotland! Scotland! I must weep tears of blood for this!' He rose in agitation. —Baliol followed him with his eyes:—'Amiable Bruce! you too severely arraign a fault, that was venial in you. Your father gave himself to Edward, and his son accompanied the tribute.' Bruce vehemently answered, 'If King Edward ever said that, he uttered a falsehood. My

father loved him, confided in him, and the ingrate betrayed him! His fidelity was no gift of himself, in acknowledgment of inferiority; it was the pledge of a friendship exchanged on equal terms on the fields of Palestine. And well did King Edward know that he had no right over either my father or me; for in the moment he doubted our attachment, he was aware of having forfeited it; he knew he had no legal claim on us; and forgetting every law human and divine, he made us prisoners. But my father found liberty in the grave; and I am ready to take a sure revenge in—' he would have added 'Scotland;' but he forbore to give the last blow to the unhappy Baliol, by showing him that his kingdom had indeed passed from him; and that the man was before him, who might be destined to wield his sceptre. Bruce paused, and sat down in generous confusion.

'Hesitate not,' said Baliol, 'to say, where you will take your revenge! I know that the brave Wallace has laid open the way. Had I possessed such a leader of my troops, I should not now be a mendicant in this hovel; I should not be a creature, to be pitied and despised.—Wear him, Bruce, wear him in your heart's core. He gives the throne he might have filled.'—'Make not that a subject of praise,' cried Wallace, 'which, if I had left undone, would have stampt me a traitor. I have only performed my duty; and may the Holy Anointer of the hearts of kings, guide Bruce to his kingdom, and keep him there in peace and honour!'

Baliol rose in his bed at these words: 'Bruce,' said he, 'approach me near.' He obeyed. The feeble monarch turned to Wallace: 'You have supported what was my kingdom, through its last struggles for liberty: put forth your hand, and support its exiled sovereign, in his last regal act.' Wallace raised the King, so as to enable him to assume a kneeling posture. Dizzy with the exertion, for a moment he rested on the shoulder of the chief; and then looking up, he met the eye of Bruce, gazing on him with

compassionate interest. The unhappy monarch stretched out his arms to heaven:—'May God pardon the injuries, which my fatal ambition did to you and yours; the miseries I brought upon my country;—and let your reign redeem my errors! May the spirit of wisdom bless you, my son!' His hands were now laid, with pious fervour, on the head of Bruce, who sunk on his knees before him. 'Whatever rights I had to the crown of Scotland, by the worthlessness of my reign they are forfeited; and I resign all unto you, even to the participation of the mere title of king. It has been as the ghost of my former self, as an accusing spirit to me; but, I trust, an angel of light to you, it will conduct your people into all happiness!'—Exhausted by his feelings, he sunk back into the arms of Wallace.—Bruce, rising from his knees, poured a little of the herb-balsam into the King's mouth, and he revived. As Wallace laid him back on his pillow, he gazed wistfully at him, and grasping his hand, said in a low voice, 'How did I throw a blessing from me! But in those days, when I rejected your services at Dunbar, I knew not the Almighty arm which brought the boy of Ellerslie to save his country!—I scorned the patriot flame, that spoke your mission, and the mercy of Heaven departed from me!'[1]

Memory was now busy with the thoughts of Bruce. He remembered his father's weak, if not criminal devotion at that time to the interests of Edward; he remembered his heart-wrung death; and looking at the desolate old age of another of Edward's victims, his brave soul melted to pity and regret; and he retired into a distant part of the room, to shed, unobserved, the tears he could not restrain. Wallace soon after saw the eyes of the exhausted king close in sleep: and cautious of awakening him, he did not stir; but leaning against the thick oaken frame of the bed, was soon lost in as deep a repose.

[1] This renunciation of Baliol's in favour of Bruce, is an historical fact; and it was made in France.

CHAPTER XL

CHATEAU GALLIARD

THE entrance of the old woman, about an hour after sunrise, awakened Wallace; but Baliol continued to sleep. On the chief's opening his eyes, Bruce, with a smile, stretched out his hand to him. Wallace rose, and whispering the widow, to abide by her guest till they should return; the twain went forth to enjoy the mutual confidence of friendship. A wood opened its umbrageous arms at a little distance; and thither, over the dew-bespangled grass, they bent their way. The birds sang from tree to tree; and Wallace, seating himself under an overhanging beech, which canopied a narrow winding of the river Seine, listened, with mingled pain and satisfaction, to the communications which Bruce had to impart relative to the recent scenes at Durham.

'So rapid had been the events,' observed the Scottish Prince, when he concluded his narrative, 'that all appears to me a troubled vision:—and blest, indeed, was the awaking of last night, when your voice, sounding from the room below that in which I slept, called me to embrace my best friend; as became the son of my ancestors—free; and ready to renew the brightness of their name!'

The discourse next turned on their future plans. Wallace, narrating his adventure with the Red Reaver; and the acknowledgments of Philip for the rescue of his son; proposed, that the favour he should ask in return (the King of France being earnest to bestow on him some especial mark of gratitude), should be his interference with Edward; to grant the Scots a peaceable retention of their rights. 'In that case, my Prince,' said he, 'you will take possession of your kingdom, with the olive-branch in your hand.' Bruce smiled, but shook his head; 'And what then will Robert Bruce be? A king, to be sure! but a king without a name!—Who won me my kingdom? Who

accomplished this peace? Was it not William Wallace? Can I then consent to mount the throne of my ancestors, so poor, so inconsiderable a creature? I am not jealous of your fame, Wallace; I glory in it; for you are more to me than the light to my eyes:—but I would prove my right to the crown, by deeds worthy of a sovereign. Till I have shown myself in the field against Scotland's enemies, I cannot consent to be restored to my inheritance, even by you.'

As morning was now advanced, the friends turned towards the cottage; intending to see Baliol safe; and then proceed together to Guienne, to the rescue of Lady Helen. That accomplished, they would visit Paris, and hear its monarch's determination.

On entering the humble mansion, they found Baliol awake, and anxiously inquiring of the widow, what was become of the two knights. At sight of them, he stretched out his hands to both, and said, he should be able to travel in a few hours. Wallace proposed sending to Rouen for a litter, to carry him the more easily thither. 'No,' cried Baliol with a frown; 'Rouen shall never see me again within its walls. It was coming from thence, that I lost my way last night; and though my poor servants would gladly have returned with me, sooner than see me perish in the storm; yet rather would I have been found dead on the road, a reproach to the kings who have betrayed me, than have taken an hour's shelter in that inhospitable city.'

While the friends took the simple breakfast prepared for them by the widow, Baliol related, that in consequence of the interference of Philip le Bel with Edward, he had been released from the Tower of London, and sent to France, but under an oath never to leave that country. Philip gave the exiled king the castle of Galliard for a residence; where, for some time, he enjoyed the shadow of royalty; having still a sort of court, composed of his own noble followers, some of whom were now with him; and the

barons of the neighbourhood. Philip allowed him guards and a splendid table. But on the peace being signed between France and England; in order that Edward might give up his ally the Earl of Flanders, to his offended liege lord; the French monarch consented to relinquish the cause of Baliol; and, though he should continue to grant him a shelter in his dominions, he removed from him all the appendages of a king.

'Accordingly,' continued Baliol, 'the guard was taken from my gates; my establishment reduced to that of a private nobleman; and no longer having it in my power to gratify the avidity, or to flatter the ambition of those who came about me, I was soon left nearly alone. All but the poor old lieges, whom you see, and who had been faithful to me through every change of my life, instantly deserted the forlorn Baliol. In vain I remonstrated with Philip; either my letters never reached him, or he disdained to answer the man whose claims he had abandoned. Things were in this state, when the other day an English lord found it convenient to bring his suite to my castle. I received him with hospitality; but soon found that what I gave in courtesy, he seized as a right. In the true spirit of his master Edward, he treated me more like the keeper of an hostel, than a generous host. And, on my attempting to plead with him for a Scottish lady, whom his turbulent passions have forced from her country, and reduced to a pitiable state of illness, he derided my arguments; sarcastically telling me, that—had I taken care of my kingdom, the door would not have been left open for him to steal its fairest prize——'

Wallace interrupted him—'Heaven grant you may be speaking of Lord de Valence, and Lady Helen Mar!' 'I am,' replied Baliol: 'they are now at Galliard; and as her illness seems a lingering one, De Valence declared to me his intentions of continuing there. He seized upon the best apartments; and carried himself with so much haughtiness, that, provoked beyond endurance, I ordered

my horse, and, accompanied by my honest courtiers, rode to Rouen, to obtain redress from the governor. But the unworthy Frenchman advised me to go back, and by flattering De Valence, try to regain the favour of Edward. I retired in indignation, determining to assert my own rights in my own castle; but the storm overtook me; and being forsaken by false friends, I am saved by generous enemies.'

Wallace explained his errand respecting Lady Helen; and anxiously inquired of Baliol, whether he meant to return to Galliard? 'Immediately'; replied he: 'go with me, and if the lady consent, (which I do not doubt, for she scorns his prayers for her hand, and passes night and day in tears;) I engage to assist in her escape.'

Baliol then advised, they should not all return to the castle together. The sight of two knights of their appearance, accompanying his host, being likely to alarm De Valence. 'The quietest way,' continued the deposed king, 'is the surest. Follow me at a short distance; and towards the shadows of evening, knock at the gates, and request a night's entertainment. I will grant it; and then your happy destiny, ever fortunate Wallace, must do the rest.'

This scheme being approved, a litter of hurdles was formed for the invalid monarch, and the old woman's pallet spread upon it: 'I will return it to you, my good widow,' said Baliol; 'and with proofs of my gratitude.' The two friends assisted the King to rise. When he set his foot to the floor, he felt so surprisingly better, that he thought he could ride the journey. Wallace overruled this wish; and with Bruce, supported his emaciated figure towards the door. The widow stood, to see her guests depart. As Baliol mounted the litter, he slid a piece of gold into her hand. Wallace saw not what the King had given, and gave a purse as his reward. Bruce had nought to bestow. He had left Durham with little, and that little was expended. 'My good widow,' said he, 'I am poor in

everything but gratitude. In lieu of gold, you must accept my prayers!'—'May they, sweet youth,' replied she, 'return on your own head; giving you bread from the barren land, and water out of the sterile rock!'

When Baliol arrived within a few miles of Château Galliard, he pointed to a wooded part of the forest, and told the friends, that under its groves they had best shelter themselves till the sun set; soon after which he should expect them at the castle.

When they came in view of the antique towers of Galliard, they slackened their pace, and leisurely advanced to the gates. The bugle of Wallace demanded admittance; a courteous assent was brought by the warder; the gates unfolded, the friends entered; and in the next instant they were conducted into a room where Baliol sat. De Valence was walking to and fro in a great chafe: he started at sight of the princely armour of Wallace; (for he, as Baliol had done, now conceived, from the lilied diadem, that the stranger must be of the royal house of France;) and composing his turbulent spirit, he bowed respectfully to the supposed prince. Wallace returned the salutation; and Baliol, rising, accosted him with a dignified welcome. He saw the mistake of De Valence, and perceived how greatly it might facilitate the execution of their project.

On his host's return to the château, De Valence had received him with more than his former insolence; for the governor of Rouen had sent him information of the despised monarch's discontent—and when the despotic lord heard a bugle at the gate, and learned that it was answered by the admission of two travelling knights, he flew to Baliol in displeasure, commanding him to recall his granted leave.—At the moment of his wrath, Wallace entered, and covered him with confusion. Struck, at seeing a French prince, in one of the persons he was going to treat with such indignity, he shrunk into himself; and bowed before him, with all the cowering meanness of a base and haughty soul. Wallace, feeling his real preëminence, bent his head in

acknowledgment, with a majesty which convinced the Earl that he was not mistaken. Baliol welcomed his guest, in a manner not to dispel the illusion.

'Happy am I,' cried he, 'that the hospitality, which John Baliol intended to show to a mere traveller, confers on him the distinction of serving one of a race, whose favour confers protection, and its friendship, honour.' Wallace returned a gracious reply to this speech; and turning to Bruce, said, 'This knight is my friend; and though from peculiar circumstances, neither of us choose to disclose our names during our journey; yet, whatever they may be, I trust you will confide in the word of one, whom you have honoured by the address you have now made! and, believe, that his friend is not unworthy the hospitalities of him who was once King of Scots.'

De Valence now approached; and announcing who he was, assured the knights in the name of the King of England, whom he was going to represent in Guienne, of every respect from himself, and assistance from his retinue, to bring them properly on their way. 'I return you the thanks due to your courtesy,' replied Wallace; 'and shall certainly remain to-night a burden on King Baliol; but in the morning we must depart as we came; having a vow to perform, which excludes the service of attendants.'

A splendid supper was served, at the board of which De Valence sat, as well as Baliol. From the moment that the strangers entered, the English Earl never withdrew; so cautious was he to prevent Baliol informing his illustrious guests of the captivity of Lady Helen Mar. Wallace ate nothing; he sat with his visor still closed; and almost in profound silence, never speaking but when spoken to, and then only answering in as few words as possible. De Valence supposed that this taciturnity was connected with his vow, and did not further remark it; but Bruce (who at Caen had furnished himself with a complete suit of black armour) appeared, though equally invisible under his visor, infinitely more accessible. The humbler fashion

of his martial accoutrement, did not announce the prince; but his carriage was so noble, his conversation bespoke so accomplished a mind, and brave a spirit, that De Valence did not doubt that both the men before him were of the royal family.

Notwithstanding Baliol's resolution to keep awake, and assist his friends in their enterprise, he was so overcome by fatigue, that he fell asleep soon after supper; and so gave De Valence full opportunity to unveil his widely grasping mind to the Scottish chiefs.

Meanwhile Wallace, wrapped himself in Baliol's blue cloak, which lay in the anteroom; and enveloping even his helmet in the friendly mantle, he moved swiftly along the gallery towards the chamber of Helen. To be prepared for obstacles, he had obtained from Baliol a particular description of the situation of every apartment leading to it. It was now within an hour of midnight. He passed through several large vacant rooms, and at last arrived at the important door. It opened into a small chamber, in which two female attendants lay asleep. He gently raised the latch; and, with caution taking the lamp which burnt on the table, glided softly through the curtains which filled the cedar arch that led into the apartment of Helen. He approached the bed, covering the light with his hand, while he observed her. She was in a profound sleep, but pale as the sheet which enveloped her:—her countenance seemed troubled, her brows frequently knit themselves, and she started as she dreamt, as if in apprehension. Once he heard her lips faintly murmur, 'Save me, my father! on you alone——' there she stopped. His heart bled at this appeal. 'Thy father's friend comes to save thee,' he would have cried, but he checked the exclamation:—his hand dropped at the same instant from before the lamp, and the blaze striking full on her eyes, waked her.—She looked up; she believed her dream realised; De Valence leaning over her bed, and herself wholly in his power! A shriek of horror was bursting

from her lips, when Wallace hastily raised his visor.—At the moment when despair was in her orphan heart, and her whole soul turned with abhorrence from the supposed De Valence, she met the eyes dearest to her on earth—those of indeed her father's friend!—Stretching forth her arms, for an instant she seemed flying to the protection of him to whose honour she had been bequeathed; but falling back again on her bed, the glad surprise of seeing him, who in her estimation was her only earthly security now that her father was no more, shook her with such emotion, that Wallace feared to see her delicate frame sink into some deadly swoon. Alarmed for her life, or the accomplishment of her deliverance, he threw himself on his knees beside her, and softly whispered, 'Be composed, for the love of Heaven, and your own safety. Be collected and firm, and you shall fly this place with me to-night.' Hardly conscious of the action, Helen grasped the hand that held hers, and would have replied; but her voice failing, she fainted on his arm. Wallace now saw no alternative but to remove her hence, even in this insensible state; and, raising her gently in his arms, enveloped in the silk coverlid, with cautious steps, he bore her through the curtained entrance, and passed the sleeping damsels, into the ante-rooms. To meet any of De Valence's men, while in this situation, would betray all. To avoid this, he hastened through the illuminated passages, and turning into the apartment appointed for himself, laid the now reviving Helen upon a couch. 'Water,' said she; 'and I shall soon be myself again.' He gave her some; and at the same time laying a page's suit of clothes (which Baliol had provided) beside her; 'Dress yourself in these, Lady Helen,' said he; 'I shall withdraw, meanwhile, into the passage; but your safety depends on expedition.'

Before she could answer, he had disappeared. Helen instantly threw herself on her knees, to thank a Higher Power, for this commencement of her deliverance, and to beseech His blessing on its consummation. She rose

The Departure for Paris

strengthened; and, obeying Wallace, the moment she was equipped she laid her hand upon the latch; but the watchful ear of her friend heard her, and he immediately opened the door. The lamps of the gallery shone full upon the light grace of her figure, as shrinking with blushing modesty, and yet eager to be with her preserver, she stood hesitating before him. He threw his cloak over her, and putting her arm through his, in the unobscured blaze of his princely armour, he descended to the lower hall of the castle. One man only was there. Wallace ordered him to open the great door.—'It is a fine night,' said he, 'and I shall ride some miles before I sleep.'—The man asked if he were to saddle the horses;—he was answered in the affirmative; and the gate being immediately unbarred, Wallace led his precious charge into the freedom of the open air. As soon as she saw the outside of those towers, which she had entered as the worst of all prisoners, her heart so overflowed with gratitude to her deliverer, that sinking by his side upon her knees, she could only grasp his hand, and bathe it with the pure tears of rescued innocence.

The man brought the horses from the stable. He knew that two strangers had arrived at the castle, and not noticing Helen's stature, supposed they were both before him. He had been informed by the servants, that the taller of the two was the Count de Valois; and he now held the stirrup for him to mount.—But Wallace placed Helen on Bruce's horse; and then vaulting on his own, put a piece of gold into the attendant's hand. 'You will return, noble Prince?' inquired the man. 'Why should you doubt it?' answered Wallace. 'Because,' replied the servant, 'I wish the brother of the King of France, to know the foul deeds which are doing in his dominions.'—'By whom?' asked Wallace, surprised at this address.—'By the Earl de Valence, Prince,' answered he; 'he has now in this castle a beautiful lady whom he brought from a foreign land, and treats in a manner unbecoming a knight,

or a man.'—'And what would you have me do?' said Wallace, willing to judge whether this applicant were honest in his appeal. 'Come in the power of your royal brother,' answered he, 'and demand the Lady Helen Mar of Lord de Valence.'

Helen, who had listened with trepidation to this dialogue, drew nearer Wallace, and whispered in an agitated voice, 'Ah! let us hasten away!' The man was close enough to hear her. 'Hah!' cried he, in a burst of doubtful joy: 'is it so? Is she here? say so, noble knight, and Joppa Grimsby will serve ye both for ever!' 'Grimsby!' cried Helen, recollecting his voice, the moment he had declared his name: 'What! the honest English soldier?—I, and my preserver, will indeed value so trusty a follower.'

The name of Grimsby, was too familiar to the memory of Wallace, too closely associated with his most cherished meditations, for him not to recognise it with melancholy pleasure. He had never seen Grimsby, but he knew him well worthy of his confidence; and ordered him (if he really desired to follow Lady Helen) to bring two more horses from the stables.—When they were brought, Wallace made the joyful signal concerted with Bruce and Baliol—to sound the Scottish pryse, as soon as he and his fair charge were out of the castle.

The happy tidings met the ear of the Prince, while anxiously watching the sleep of De Valence, for fear he should awake, and, leaving the room, interrupt Wallace in his enterprise. What then was his transport, when the first note of the horn burst upon the silence around him!—He sprang on his feet. The impetuosity of the action roused Baliol; who had been lying all the while sound asleep in his chair. Bruce made a sign to him to be silent; and pressing his hand with energy, forgot the former Baliol in the present, and, for a moment bending his knee, kissed the hand he held; then, rising—disappeared in an instant.

He flew through the open gates. Wallace perceiving him, rode out from under the shadow of the trees. The

bright light of the moon shone on his sparkling crest:—that was sufficient for Bruce; and Wallace falling back again into the shade, was joined the next moment by his friend. Who this friend was, for whom her deliverer had told Helen he waited, she did not ask; for she dreaded, while so near danger, to breathe a word: but she guessed that it must be either Murray or Edwin. De Valence had barbarously told her, that not only her father was no more, but that her uncles, the Lords Bothwell and Ruthven, had both been killed in the last battle. Hence, with a saddened joy, one of her two bereaved cousins, she now prepared to see;—and every filial recollection pressing on her heart, her tears flowed silently and in abundance. As Bruce approached, his black mantle so wrapped him she could not distinguish his figure. Wallace stretched forth his hand to him in silence; he grasped it with the warm but mute congratulation of friendship; and throwing himself on his horse, triumphantly exclaimed, 'Now for Paris!' Helen recognised none she knew, in that voice; and drawing close to the white courser of Wallace; with something like disappointment mingling with her happier thoughts, she made her horse keep pace with the fleetness of her companions.

Avoiding the frequented track to Paris, Wallace (to whom Grimsby was now a valuable auxiliary, he being well acquainted with the country,) took a sequestered path by the banks of the Marne; and entered the forest of Vincennes just as the moon set. Having ridden far, and without cessation, the old soldier proposed their alighting, to allow the lady an opportunity of reposing awhile under the trees.—Helen was indeed nearly exhausted; and Grimsby having spread his cloak on the grass, Wallace lifted her from the horse. As soon as she put her foot to the ground, her head grew giddy, and she must have fallen, but for the supporting arm of her watchful friend. He carried her to the couch prepared by the good soldier, and laid her on it. Grimsby had been more

provident than they could have expected; for after saddling the second pair of horses, he had returned into the hall for his cloak, and taking an undrawn flask of wine from the seneschal's supper table, put it into his vest. This he now produced, and Wallace made Helen drink some of it. The cordial revived her; and sinking on her pillow of leaves, she soon found the repose her wearied frame demanded and induced. For fear of disturbing her, not a word was spoken. Wallace watched at her head, and Bruce sat at her feet, while Grimsby remained with the horses, as a kind of outpost.

The dawn had spread far over the sky, while she yet slept. Wallace sat contemplating her, and the now sleeping Bruce, who had also imperceptibly sunk to rest. Various and anxious were his meditations. He had hardly seen seven-and-twenty years, yet so had he been tried in the vicissitudes of life, that he felt as if he had lived a century; and instead of looking on the lovely Helen, as on one whose charms might claim a lover's wishes in his breast, he regarded her with sentiments more like parental tenderness. That, indeed, seemed the affection which now reigned in his bosom. He felt as a father, towards Scotland. For every son and daughter of that harassed country, he was ready to lay down his life. Edwin he cherished in his heart, as he would have done the dearest of his own offspring. It was as a parent to whom a beloved and prodigal son had returned, that he looked on Bruce. But Helen, of all Scotland's daughters, she was the most precious in his eyes: set love aside, and no object without the touch of that all-pervading passion, could he regard with more endearing tenderness than he did Helen Mar.

The shades of night vanished before the bright uprise of the king of day, and with them her slumbers. She stirred; she awoke. The lark was then soaring with shrill cadence over her head: its notes pierced the ear of Bruce, and he started on his feet. 'You have allowed me to sleep,

Wallace?'—'And why not?' replied he. 'Here it was safe for all to have slept. Yet had there been danger, I was at my post, to have called you.'

The morning vapours having dispersed from the opposite plain, and Helen quite refreshed by her long repose, Wallace seated her on horseback, and they recommenced their journey. The helmets of both chiefs were now open. Grimsby looked at one, and the other, the countenance of both assured him that he should find a protector in either. He drew towards Helen: she noticed his manner, and observing to Wallace, that she believed the soldier wished to speak with her, checked her horse. At this action, Grimsby presumed to ride up, and bowing respectfully, said, that before he followed her to Paris, it would be right for the Count de Valois to know whom he had taken into his train; 'one, Madam, who has been degraded by King Edward; degraded,' added he, 'but not debased; that last disgrace depends on myself; and I should shrink from your protection, rather than court it, were I indeed vile.' 'I have too well proved your integrity, Grimsby,' replied Helen, 'to doubt it now: but what has the Count de Valois to do, with your being under my protection? It is not to him we go, but to the French king.'—'And is not that knight, with the diadem,' inquired Grimsby, 'the Count de Valois? The servants at Château Galliard told me he was so.' Surprised at this, Helen said, the knight should answer for himself: and quickening the step of her horse, followed by Grimsby, rejoined his side.

When she informed Wallace of what had passed, he called the soldier to approach. 'Grimsby,' said he, 'you have claims upon me, which should ensure you my protection, were I even insensible to the honourable principles you have just declared to Lady Helen. But, I repeat, I am already your friend. You have only to speak, and all in my power to serve you shall be done.' 'Then, sir,' returned he, 'as mine is rather a melancholy story, and parts of it have already drawn tears from Lady Helen,

if you will honour me with your attention apart from her, I would relate how I fell into disgrace with my sovereign.'

Wallace fell a little back with Grimsby; and while Bruce and Helen rode briskly forward, he, at a slower pace, prepared to listen to the recapitulation of scenes, in which he was only too deeply interested. The soldier narrated the fatal events at Ellerslie, which had compelled him to leave the army in Scotland, that after quitting the priory of St. Fillan, he reached Guienne; and there served under the Earl of Lincoln, until the marriage of Edward with King Philip's sister, gave the English monarch quiet possession of that province.

During Wallace's conversation with the soldier, Helen was listening with delight to the encomiums which Bruce passed upon his friend and champion. As his eloquent tongue described the merits of Wallace, and expressed an ardent gratitude for his having so gloriously supplied his place to Scotland, Helen turned her eyes upon the Prince. Before, she had scarcely remarked that he was more than young and handsome; but now, while she contemplated the noble confidence which breathed in every feature, she said to herself, 'This man is worthy to be the friend of Wallace! His soul is a mirror to reflect all the brightness of Wallace's: ay, like as with the sun's rays, to kindle with Heaven's fire, all on whom it turns.'

Bruce remarked the unusual animation of her eyes, as she looked on him. 'You feel all I say of Wallace!' said he. And it was not a charge, at which she need blush!

At this moment Wallace joined them. He saw the action, and the animation of each countenance, and looked at Bruce with a glance of inquiry; but Bruce perceived nothing of a lover's jealousy in the look: it carried the wish of a friend, to share what had impressed them with such happy traits.

'We have been talking of you,' returned the Prince; 'and if to be beloved, is a source of joy, you must be peculiarly blest. The affections of Lady Helen and myself

have met, and made your heart the altar on which we have pledged our fraternal love.' Wallace regarded each with a look of tenderness. 'It is my joy to love you both, like a brother; but Lady Helen must consider me, as even more than that to her. I am her father's representative; I am the voice of grateful Scotland, thanking her for the preservation, her generous exertions yielded!—And to you, my Prince, I am your friend, your subject, all that is devoted and true.'

Thus enjoying the dear communion of hearts, the interchange of mind, and mingling soul with soul, did these three friends journey towards the gates of Paris. Every hour seemed an age of blessedness to Helen; Wallace animated the scene! Hardly did she know what it was to draw any but sighs of bliss, till she saw the towers of Paris embattling the horizon. They reminded her, that she was now going to be occasionally divided from him; that when entered within those walls, it would no longer be deemed decorous for her to pass days and nights in listening to his voice. She would hardly have acknowledged to herself that what she felt was love, had not the anticipation of even an hour's separation from him whispered the secret to her heart.

CHAPTER XLI

PARIS

When they were arrived within a short distance from Paris, Wallace wrote a few lines to King Philip, informing him who were the companions of his journey; and that he would rest near the abbey of St. Genevieve, until he should receive his Majesty's greetings to Bruce: also the Queen's granted protection, for the daughter of the Earl of Mar. Grimsby was the bearer of this letter. He soon returned with an escort of honour, accompanied by Prince Louis himself. At sight of Wallace, he flew into his arms; and after embracing him again and again, with all the

unchecked ardour of youthful gratitude, he presented to him a packet from the King.

It expressed the satisfaction of Philip, at the near prospect of his seeing the man whom he had so long admired, and whose valour had wrought him such service as the preservation of his son.—He then added, that he had other matters to thank him for, when they should meet; and subjects to discuss, which would be much elucidated by the presence of Bruce. 'According to your request,' continued he, 'the name of neither, shall be made public at my court. My own family only, know who are to be my illustrious guests. The Queen is impatient to bid them welcome; and no less eager to greet the Lady Helen Mar, with her friendship and protection.'

A beautiful palfrey, superbly caparisoned, and tossing its fair neck amid the pride of its gorgeous chanfraine, was led forward by a page. Two ladies also, bearing rich apparel for Helen, appeared in the train. When their errand was made known to Wallace, he communicated it to Helen. Her delicacy indeed wished to lay aside her page's apparel, before she was presented to the Queen—but she had been so happy, while she wore it!—'Days have passed with me, in these garments,' said she to herself, 'which may never occur again!' The ladies were conducted to her. They delivered a gracious message from their royal mistress, and opened the caskets. Helen sighed; she could urge nothing in opposition to their embassy, and reluctantly assented to the change they were to make in her appearance. She stood mute, while they disarrayed her of her humble guise, and clothed her in the robes of France. During their attendance, in the adulatory strains of the court, they broke out in encomiums on the graces of her person; but to all this she turned an inattentive ear: her mind was absorbed in what she had enjoyed; in the splendid penance she might now undergo.

One of the women was throwing the page's clothes carelessly into a bag, when Helen perceiving her, with

ill-concealed eagerness, cried, 'Take care of that suit; it is more precious to me than gold or jewels.'—'Indeed!' answered the attendant, more respectfully folding it; 'it does not seem of very rich silk.'—'Probably not,' returned Helen, 'but it is valuable to me; and wherever I lodge, I will thank you to put it into my apartment.'—A mirror was now presented, that she might see herself. She started at the load of jewels with which they had adorned her; and, while tears filled her eyes, she mildly said, 'I am a mourner; these ornaments must not be worn by me.' The ladies obeyed her wish, to have them taken off: and, with thoughts divided between her father and her father's friend, she was conducted towards the palfrey. Wallace approached her; and Bruce flew forward, with his usual haste, to assist her:—but it was no longer the beautiful little page, that met his view, the confidential and frank glance of a youthful brother!—It was a lovely woman, arrayed in all the charms of female apparel; trembling and blushing, as she again appeared as a woman before the eyes of the man she loved.

Bruce looked at her with delighted wonder. He held out his hand to her, with a cordial smile: 'Lady Helen, we are still to be the same! Robes of no kind, must ever separate the affections born in our pilgrimage!' She put her hand into his, with a glow of delight; 'While Sir William Wallace allows me to call him brother,' answered she, 'that will ever be a sanction to our friendship: but courts are formal places, and I now go to one,'—'And I will soon remove you to another,' replied he, 'where——' he hesitated—looked at Wallace, and then resumed; 'where every wish of my sister Helen's heart, shall be gratified, or I be no king.' Helen blushed deeply, and hastened towards the palfrey. Wallace placed her on the embroidered saddle; and Prince Louis preceding the cavalcade, it moved on.

As Bruce vaulted into his seat, he said something to his friend, of the perfectly feminine beauty of Helen. 'But her soul is fairer!' returned Wallace. The prince of Scotland,

with a gay, but tender smile, softly whispered, 'Fair, doubly fair to you!' Wallace drew a deep sigh: 'I never knew but one woman who resembled her; and she did indeed excel all of created mould. From infancy to manhood, I read every thought of her angelic heart: I became the purer by the study; and I loved my model with an idolatrous adoration. There was my error! But those sympathies, those hours are past. My heart will never throb, as it has throbbed; never rejoice, as it has rejoiced; for she who lived but for me, who doubled all my joys, is gone!—Oh! my Prince, though blest with friendship, there are times when I feel that I am solitary!'—Bruce looked at him with some surprise: 'Solitary! Wallace! can you ever be solitary, and near Helen Mar?'—'Perhaps more so then, than at any other time; for her beauties, her excellences, remind me of what were once mine, and recall every regret. O! Bruce! thou canst not comprehend my loss!'

'And is love so constant? so tenacious!' exclaimed Bruce: 'Is it to consume your youth, Wallace? Is it to wed such a heart as yours to the tomb?—Ah! am I not to hope, that the throne of my children may be upheld by a race of thine?' Wallace shook his head; but with a placid firmness replied, 'Your throne, and your children's, if they follow your example, will be upheld by Heaven.'

In discourse like this, the youthful Prince of Scotland caught a clearer view of the inmost thoughts of his friend, than he had been able to discern before; for war, or Bruce's own interests, having particularly engaged them in all their former conversations, Wallace had never been induced to glance at the private circumstances of his history. While Bruce sighed in tender pity for the captivated heart of Helen, he the more deeply revered, more intensely loved, his suffering and heroic friend.

A few hours brought the royal escort to the Louvre; and, through a train of nobles, Lady Helen was led by Prince Louis into the regal saloon. The Scottish chiefs followed. The Queen and the Count D'Evereux, received Bruce and

Helen; while De Valois conducted Wallace to the King; who had retired, for the purpose of this conference, to his closet.

At sight of the armour, which he had sent to the preserver of his son, Philip instantly recognised the Scottish hero, and, rising from his seat, hastened forward, and clasped him in his arms: 'Wonder not, august chief,' exclaimed he, 'at the weakness exhibited in these eyes! It is the tribute of nature, to a virtue which loads even kings with benefits. You have saved my son's life; you have preserved from taint, the honour of my sister!'—Philip then proceeded to inform his auditor, that he had heard from a confessor of Queen Margaret's, just arrived from England, all that had lately happened at Edward's court; and of Wallace's letter, to clear the innocence of that injured Princess. 'She is perfectly reinstated in the King's confidence,' added Philip; 'but I can never pardon the infamy with which he would have overwhelmed her; nay, it has already dishonoured her; for the blasting effects of slander, no time nor labour can erase. I yield to the prayers of my too gentle sister, not to openly resent this wrong, but in private, he shall feel a brother's indignation. I do not declare war against him; but ask what you will, bravest of men, and were it to place the crown of Scotland on your head, demand it of me, and by my concealed agency it shall be effected.' The reply of Wallace was simple. He claimed no merit in the justice he had done the Queen of England; neither in his rescue of Prince Louis; but as a proof of King Philip's friendship, he gladly embraced his offered services with regard to Scotland.—'Not,' added he, 'to send troops into that country, against England. Scotland is now free of its Southron invaders; all I require is, that you will use your royal influence with Edward, to allow it to remain so. Pledge your faith, most gracious monarch, with my master the royally descended Bruce, who is now in your palace. He will soon assume the crown that is his right; and with such an ally as France to hold the ambition of Edward in check, we may certainly

hope that the bloody feuds between Scotland and England may at last be laid at rest.'

At an early hour next day, Wallace and Bruce took leave of the French King. The Queen kissed Helen affectionately, and whispered, while she tied a jewelled collar round her neck, that when she returned, she hoped to add to it the coronet of Gascony. Helen's only reply was a sigh, and her eye turned unconsciously on Wallace. He was clad in a plain chain suit of black armour, with a red plume in his helmet; the ensign of the Reaver, whose name he had assumed. All of his former habit that he now wore about him, was the sword which he had taken from Edward. At the moment Helen looked towards Wallace, Prince Louis was placing a cross-hilted dagger in his girdle. 'My deliverer,' said he, 'wear this for the sake of the descendant of St. Louis. It accompanied that holy King through all his wars in Palestine. It twice saved him from the assassin's steel; and I pray Heaven it may prove as faithful to you.'

Soon after this, Douglas and Cummin entered, to pay their parting respects to the King; and that over, Wallace taking Helen by the hand, led her forth, followed by Bruce and his friends.

At Havre they embarked for the frith of Tay; and a favourable gale driving them through the straits of Calais, they launched out into the wide ocean.

CHAPTER XLII

SCOTLAND

The eighth morning from the day in which the Red Reaver's ship was relaunched from the Norman harbour, Wallace, now the representative of that once formidable pirate, bearing the white flag of good faith, entered beween the castled shores of the frith of Tay, and cast anchor under the towers of Dundee.

When Bruce leaped upon the beach, he turned to Wallace, and said with exultation, though in a low voice, 'Scotland now receives her King! This earth shall cover me, or support my throne!'—'It shall support your throne, and bless it too,' replied Wallace: 'you are come in the power of justice, and that is the power of God. I know Him in whom I bid you confide; for He has been my shield and sword, and never yet have I turned my back upon my enemies. Trust, my dear Prince, where I have trusted; and while virtue is your incense, you need not doubt the issue of your prayers.' Had Wallace seen the face of Bruce at that moment, but the visor concealed it, he would have beheld an answer in his eloquent eyes, which required not words to explain. He grasped the hand of Wallace with fervour, and briefly replied—'Your trust shall be my trust!'

The chiefs did not stay longer at Dundee, than was requisite to furnish them with horses to convey them to Perth; where Ruthven still bore sway. When they arrived, he was at Hunting-tower, and thither they went. The meeting was fraught with many mingled feelings. Helen had not seen her uncle since the death of her father; and, as soon as the first gratulations were over, she retired to an apartment to weep alone.

The sight of her uncle, and the objects around, had so recalled the image of her father, that ever since her arrival, a foreboding sadness had hung over her spirits. She remembered, that a few months ago she had seen that beloved parent, go out to a battle, whence he never returned.——Should the same doom await her with regard to Wallace!—The idea shook her frame with an agitation that sunk her, in spite of herself, on the bosom of this truest of friends, when Edwin approached to lead her to her horse. Her emotions penetrated the heart against which she leaned. 'My gentle sister,' said Wallace, 'do not despair of our final success; of the safety of all whom you regard.'—'Ah! Wallace,' faltered she, in a voice

rendered hardly audible by tears, 'but did I not lose my father?'—'Sweet Helen,' returned he, tenderly grasping her trembling hand; 'you lost him, but he gained by the exchange. And should the peace of Scotland be purchased by the lives of some who contend for her emancipation; should they even be your friends, if Bruce survives, you must still think your prayers blest. Were I to fall, my sister, my sorrows would be over; and from the region of universal blessedness, I should enjoy the sight of Scotland's happiness."

'Were we all to enter those regions at one time,' faintly replied Helen, 'there would be comfort in such thoughts; but as it is——' here she paused; tears stopped her utterance.—'A few years, is a short separation,' returned Wallace, 'when we are, hereafter, to be united to all eternity. This is my consolation, when I think of Marion; —when memory dwells with the friends, lost in these dreadful conflicts;—and, whatever may be the fate of those who now survive, call to remembrance my words, dear Helen, and the God who was my instructor, will send you comfort.'

'Then farewell, my friend, my brother!' cried she, forcibly tearing herself away, and throwing herself into the arms of Edwin; 'leave me now; and the angel of the just, will bring you in glory, here, or hereafter, to your sister Helen.' Wallace fervently kissed the hand she again extended to him; and, with an emotion, which he had thought he should never feel again for mortal woman, left the apartment.

The day after the departure of Helen, Bruce became impatient to take the field; and, to indulge this laudable eagerness, Wallace set forth with him to meet the returning steps of Ruthven and his gathered legions.

Having passed along the romantic borders of Invermay, the friends descended towards the precipitous banks of the Earn, at the foot of the Grampians.—In these green labyrinths, they wound their way, till Bruce, who had

never before been in such mountain wilds, expressed a fear that Wallace had mistaken the track; for this seemed far from any human footstep.

Wallace replied, with a smile,'The path is familiar to me, as the garden of Hunting-tower.'

The day, which had been cloudy, suddenly turned to wind and rain; which certainly spread an air of desolation over the scene very dreary to an eye accustomed to the fertile plains and azure skies of the south. The whole of the road was rough, dangerous, and dreadful. The steep and black rocks, towering above their heads, seemed to threaten the precipitation of their impending masses into the path below. But Wallace had told Bruce, they were in the right track; and he gaily breasted both the storm and the perils of the road. They ascended a mountain, whose enormous piles of granite, torn by many a winter tempest, projected their barren summits from a surface of moor-land, on which lay a deep incrustation of snow. The blast now blew a tempest; and the rain and sleet beat so hard, that Bruce, laughing, declared he believed the witches of his country were in league with Edward; and, hid in shrouds of mist, were all assembled here, to drive their lawful Prince into the roaring cataracts beneath.

Thus enveloped in a sea of vapours, with torrents of water pouring down the sides of their armour, did the friends descend the western brow of this part of the Grampians, until they approached Loch Earn. They had hardly arrived there, before the rain ceased; and the clouds, rolling away from the sides of the mountains, discovered the vast and precipitous Ben Vorlich.

The whole mantle of clouds, with which the tops of all the mountains had been obscured, rolled away towards the west, and discovered to the eye of Wallace, that this line of light, which he had discerned through the mist, was the host of Ruthven descending Ben Vorlich in defiles. From the nature of the path, they were obliged to move in

a winding direction; and as the sun now shone full upon their arms, and their lengthened lines gradually extended from the summit of the mountain to its base, no sight could contain more of the sublime; none of truer grandeur, to the enraptured mind of Bruce. He forgot his horror of the wastes he had passed over, in the joy of beholding so noble an army of his countrymen, thus approaching, to place him upon the throne of his ancestors.

Lord Ruthven no sooner reached the banks of Loch Earn, than he espied the Prince and Wallace. He joined them; then marshalling his men in a wide tract of land at the head of that vast body of water, placed himself with the two supposed De Longuevilles, in the van; and in this array, marched through the valleys of Strathmore and Strathallan, into Stirlingshire. The young Earl of Fife held the government of the castle and town of Stirling; and as he had been a zealous supporter of the rebellious Lord Badenoch, Bruce negatived Ruthven's proposal to send in a messenger for the Earl's division of troops:—'No, my Lord,' said he, 'like my friend Wallace, I will have no divided spirits near me; all must be earnest in my cause, or entirely out of the contest. I am content with the brave men around me.'

In passing the Pentland Hills into Mid-Lothian, the chiefs were met by Edwin; who had crossed from the north, by the frith of Forth; and having heard no tidings of the Scottish army in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, he had turned to meet it on the most probable road. Wallace introduced him to the Knight of the Green Plume: for that was the appellation by which the stranger desired to be known:—and then made inquiries how Lady Helen had borne the fatigues of her journey to Braemar. 'Pretty well there,' replied he, 'but much better back again.'—He then explained, that on his arrival with her, neither Lady Mar, nor his mother, would consent to remain so far from the spot where Wallace was to contend again for the safety of their country. Helen did not say anything in

opposition to their wishes; and at last Edwin yielded to the entreaties and tears of his mother and aunt, to bring them to where they might, at least not long endure the misery of suspense. Having consented, without an hour's delay, he set forth with the ladies, to retrace his steps to Hunting-tower; and there he left them, under a guard of three hundred men, whom he brought from Braemar for that purpose.

Bruce, whose real name had not been revealed to the other ladies of Ruthven's family, in a lowered voice, asked Edwin some questions relative to the spirits in which Helen had parted with him. 'In losing her,' added he, 'my friend and I feel but as part of what we were.—Her presence seemed to ameliorate the fierceness of our war-councils; and ever reminded me of the angelic guard by whom Heaven points our way.'—'I left her with looks like the angel you speak of,' answered Edwin: 'she bade me farewell, upon the platform of the eastern tower of the castle. When I gave her the parting embrace, she raised herself from my breast, and stretching her arms to heaven, with her pure soul in her eyes, she exclaimed, 'Bless him, gracious God; bless him, and his noble commander!' In such discourses, the Scottish leaders marched along, till passing before the lofty ridge of the Corstophine Hills, they were met by groups of flying peasantry. At sight of the Scottish banners they stopped, and informed their armed countrymen, that the new Regent, John of Badenoch, having rashly attacked the Southron army on its vantage ground, near Borthwick Castle, had suffered defeat; and was in full and disordered retreat towards Edinburgh; while the country people fled on all sides before the victors.

Wallace was at no loss in comprehending how much to believe in this panic; but determining, whether great or small the power of his adversary, to intercept him at Roslyn, he sent to Cummin and to Fraser, the two commanders in the beaten and dispersed armies, to rendezvous

on the banks of the Eske. The brave troops which he led, though ignorant of their real leader, obeyed his directions; under an idea they were Lord Ruthven's, who was their ostensible general, and steadily pursued their march. Every village and solitary cot seemed recently deserted; and through an awful solitude they took their rapid way, till the towers of Roslyn castle hailed them as a beacon, from amidst the wooded heights of the northern Eske. 'There,' cried Ramsay, pointing to the embattled rock, 'stands the fortress of my forefathers! It must this day be made famous, by the actions performed before its walls!'

Wallace, whose knowledge of this part of the country, was not quite so familiar as that of Ramsay, learnt sufficient from him, to decide at once which would be the most favourable position for a small and resolute band to assume, against a large and conquering army; and, accordingly disposing his troops, which did not amount to more than 8000 men; he despatched 1000, under the command of Ramsay, to occupy the numerous caves in the southern banks of the Eske; whence they were to issue in various divisions, and with shouts, on the first appearance of advantage either on his side, or on the enemy's.

Ruthven, meanwhile, went for a few minutes into the castle; to embrace his niece, and to assure the venerable Lord of Roslyn, that assistance approached his beleaguered walls.

Edwin, who with Grimsby had volunteered the dangerous service of reconnoitring the enemy, returned within an hour, bringing in a straggler from the English camp. His life was promised him, on condition of his revealing the strength of the advancing army. The terrified wretch did not hesitate; and from him they learnt, that it was commanded by Sir John Segrave, and Ralph Confrey; who, deeming the country subdued by the two last battles gained over the Black and Red Cummins, were preparing for a general plundering. And, to sweep the land at once, Segrave had divided his army into three

divisions; to scatter themselves over the country, and everywhere gather in the spoil. To be assured of this being the truth, while Grimsby remained to guard the prisoner, Edwin went alone into the track he was told the Southrons would take; and from a height he discerned about 10,000 of them winding along the valley. With this confirmation of the man's account, he brought him to the Scottish lines; and Wallace, who well knew how to reap advantage from the errors of his enemies, being joined by Fraser and the discomfited Regent, made the concerted signal to Ruthven. That nobleman immediately pointed out to his men the waving colours of the Southron host, as it approached beneath the overhanging woods of Hawthorndean. He exhorted them, by their fathers, wives, and children, to breast the enemy at this spot; to grapple with him till he fell.—'Scotland,' cried he, 'is lost, or won, this day.—You are freemen, or slaves; your families are your own, or the property of tyrants!—Fight stoutly, and God will yield you an invisible support.'

The Scots answered their general by a shout, and calling on him to lead them forward; Ruthven placed himself, with the Regent and Fraser in the van, and led the charge. Little expecting an assault from an adversary they had so lately driven off the field, the Southrons were taken by surprise. But they fought well; and resolutely stood their ground, till Wallace and Bruce, who commanded the flanking divisions, closed in upon them with an impetuosity that drove Confrey's division into the river. Then the ambuscade of Ramsay poured from his caves; the earth seemed teeming with mailed warriors; and the Southrons, seeing the surrounding heights and the deep defiles, filled with the same terrific appearances, fled with precipitation towards their second division, which lay a few miles southward. Thither, the conquering squadrons of the Scots followed them. The fugitives, leaping the trenches of the encampment, called aloud to their comrades, 'Arm! arm! hell is in league against us!'——Segrave was soon

at the head of his legions; and a battle more desperate than the first, blazed over the field. The flying troops of the slain Confrey, rallying around the standard of their general in chief, fought with a spirit of revenge; and being now a body of nearly 20,000 men, against 8000 Scots, the conflict became tremendous. In several points the Southrons gained so greatly the advantage, that Wallace and Bruce threw themselves, successively, into those parts where the enemy most prevailed; and by exhortations, example and prowess, they a thousand times turned the fate of the day; appearing, as they shot from rank to rank, to be two comets of fire, sent before the Scottish troops, to consume all who opposed them. Segrave was taken, and forty English knights besides. The green borders of the Eske, were dyed red with Southron blood; and the enemy on all sides were calling for quarter;—when of a sudden, the cry of 'Havoc and St. George!' issued from the adjoining hill. At the same moment, a posse of country people, (who, for the sake of plunder, had stolen into that part of the deserted English camp which occupied the rear of the height, seeing the advancing troops of a third division of the enemy,) like guilty cowards rushed down amongst their brave defenders, echoing the war cry of England, and exclaiming, 'We are lost; a host, reaching to the horizon, is upon us!'—Terror struck to many a Scottish heart. The Southrons, who were just giving up their arms, leaped upon their feet. The fight recommenced with redoubled fury. Sir Robert Neville, at the head of the new reinforcement, charged into the centre of the Scottish legions. Bruce and Edwin threw themselves into the breach, which this impetuous onset had made in that part of their line; and fighting man to man, would have taken Neville, had not a follower of that nobleman, wielding a ponderous mace, struck Bruce so terrible a blow, as to fracture his helmet, and cast him from his horse to the ground. The fall of so active a leader, excited as much dismay in the surrounding Scots, as it encouraged the reviving spirits of

the enemy. Edwin exerted himself to preserve his Prince from being trampled on; and while he fought for that purpose, and afterwards sent his senseless body off the field, under charge of young Gordon, (who had been chosen by the disguised Bruce, as his especial aide,) to Roslyn Castle, Neville rescued Segrave and his knights. Lord Ruthven now contended with a feeble arm. Fatigued with the two preceding conflicts, covered with wounds, and perceiving indeed a host pouring upon them on all sides, (for the whole of Segrave's original army of 30,000 men, excepting those who had fallen in the preceding engagements, were now restored to the assault;) the Scots, in despair, gave ground; some threw away their arms to fly the faster; and by thus exposing themselves panic-struck to the swords of their enemies, redoubled the confusion. Indeed so great was the havoc, that the day must have ended in the universal destruction of every Scot in the field, had not Wallace felt the crisis; and that as Guy de Longueville, he shed his blood in vain. In vain his terrified countrymen saw him rush into the thickest of the carnage: in vain he called to them, by all that was sacred to man, to stand to the last. He was a foreigner, and they had no confidence in his exhortations; death was before them, and they turned to fly. The fate of his country hung on an instant. The last rays of the setting sun, shone full on the rocky promontory of the hill which projected over the field of combat. He took his resolution; and spurring his steed up the steep ascent, stood on the summit, where he could be seen by the whole army; then taking off his helmet, he waved it in the air, with a shout; and having drawn all eyes upon him, suddenly exclaimed—'Scots! you have this day vanquished the Southrons twice! If you be men, remember Cambus-Kenneth, and follow William Wallace to a third victory!' The cry which issued from the amazed troops, was that of a people who beheld the angel of their deliverance. 'Wallace!' was the charge-word of every heart. The hero's courage seemed instantaneously diffused

through every breast; and, with braced arms and determined spirits, forming at once into the phalanx, his thundering voice dictated,—the Southrons again felt the weight of the Scottish steel; and a battle ensued, which made the bright Eske run purple to the sea, and covered the pastoral glades of Hawthorndean with the bodies of its invaders.

Sir John Segrave, and Neville, were both taken. And, ere night closed in upon the carnage, Wallace granted quarter to those who sued for it: and, receiving their arms, left them to repose in their before depopulated camp.

CHAPTER XLIII

ROSLYN CASTLE

Wallace, having planted an adequate force in charge of the prisoners, went to the two Southron commanders; to pay them the courtesy, he thought due to their bravery and rank, before he retired with his victorious followers towards Roslyn Castle. He entered their tent alone. At sight of the warrior, who had given them so signal a defeat, the generals rose. Neville, who had received a slight wound in one of his arms, stretched out the other to Wallace. 'Sir William Wallace,' said he, 'that you were obliged to declare a name so deservedly renowned, before the troops I led, could be made to relinquish one step of their hard-earned advantage, was an acknowledgment in their favour, almost equivalent to a victory.'

Sir John Segrave, who stood leaning on his sword with a disturbed countenance, interrupted him: 'The fate of this day, cannot be attributed to any earthly name, or hand. I believe my sovereign will allow the zeal with which I have ever served him; and yet thirty thousand as brave men as ever crossed the marshes, have fallen before a handful of Scots. Three victories, won over Edward's troops in one day, are not events of a common

nature. God alone has been our vanquisher.'—'I acknowledge it,' cried Wallace; 'and that he is on the side of justice, let the return of St. Matthias's day ever remind your countrymen!'

Edwin, with the Knight of the Green Plume, (who had indeed approved his valour, by many a brave deed performed at his commander's side,) awaited Wallace's return from his prisoners' tent. Ruthven came up with Wallace before he joined them; and told him that Bruce was safe under the care of the sage of Ercildown; and that the Regent, who had been wounded in the beginning of the day, was also in Roslyn Castle. Wallace then called Edwin to him; giving him orders, that all of the survivors who had suffered in these three desperate battles should be collected from amongst the slain, and carried into the neighbouring castles, of Hawthorndean, Brunston, and Dalkeith. The rest of the soldiers were commanded to take their refreshment, still under arms. These duties performed, Wallace turned with the eagerness of friendship and loyalty, to see how Bruce fared.

Wallace saw that his Prince was not in a state to bear argument; and, as all had retired far from the couch when he approached it, in gratitude for this propriety, (for it had left him and his friend free to converse unobserved,) he turned towards the other inmates of the chamber. The sage advanced to him; and recognising in Wallace's now manly form, the fine youth he had seen with Sir Ronald Crawford at the claiming of the crown, he saluted him with a paternal affection, tempering the sublime feelings with which even he approached the resistless champion of his country; and then beckoning the beautiful girl, who had so compassionately hung over the couch of Bruce, she drew near the sage. He took her hand: 'Sir William Wallace,' said he, 'this sweet child is the youngest daughter of the brave Mar, who died in the field of glory on the Carron. Her grandfather, the Stalworth Knight of Thirlstane, fell a few weeks ago defending his castle;

and I am almost all that is left to her; though she has, or had a sister; of whom we can learn no tidings.' Isabella, for it was she, covered her face to conceal her emotions. 'Dear lady,' said Wallace, 'these venerable heroes were both known to, and beloved by me. And now that Heaven has resumed them to itself; as the last act of friendship, that I, perhaps, may be fated to pay to their offspring, I shall convey you to that sister, whose matchless heart yearns to receive so dear a consolation.'

To disengage Isabella's thoughts from the afflicting remembrances, now bathing her fair cheeks with tears, Ercildown put a cup of the mingled juice of herbs into her hand, and commissioned her to give it to their invalid. Wallace now learnt, that his friend's wound was not only in the head, accompanied by a severe concussion, but that it must be many days before he could remove from off his bed without danger. Anxious to release him from even the scarcely breathed whispers of his martial companions, who stood at some distance from his couch, Wallace immediately proposed leaving him to rest; and beckoning the chiefs, they followed him out of the apartment.

On the following morning he was aroused at day-break, by the abrupt entrance of Andrew Lord Bothwell into his tent. The well-known sounds of his voice made Wallace start from his pillow, and extend his arms to receive him. 'Murray! my brave invaluable Murray!' cried he, 'thou art welcome, once more to the side of thy brother in arms. Thee and thine must ever be first in my heart!' The young Lord Bothwell returned his warm embrace in eloquent silence; but sitting down by Wallace's couch, he grasped his hand, and pressing it to his breast, said, 'I feel a happiness here, which I have never known since the day of Falkirk. You quitted us, Wallace; and all good seemed gone with you, or buried in my father's grave. But you return! You bring conquest and peace with you; you restore our Helen to her family; you bless

us with yourself!—And shall you not see again the gay Andrew Murray? It must be so, my friend; melancholy is not my climate; and I shall now live in your beams.' 'Dear Murray!' returned Wallace, 'this generous enthusiasm, can only be equalled by my joy in all that makes you and Scotland happy.'

Though the wounded John Cummin remained possessed of the title of Regent, Wallace was virtually endowed with the authority. Whatever he suggested, was acted upon as by a decree:—all eyes looked to him, as to the cynosure by which every order of men in Scotland were to shape their course. The jealousies which had driven him from his former supreme seat, seemed to have died with their prime instigator the late Regent; and no chief of any consequence, excepting Soulis and Athol, who had retired in disgust to their castles, breathed a word in opposition to the general gratitude.

Wallace, having dictated his terms, and sent his prisoners to England, commenced the march that was to clear the Lowlands of the foe. His own valiant band, headed by Scrymgeour and Lockhart of Lee, rushed towards his standard, with a zeal that rendered each individual a host in himself. The fame of his new victories seconded by the enthusiasm of the people, and the determination of the troops, soon made him master of all the lately lost fortresses.

Hardly four weeks were consumed in these conquests, and not a rood of land remained south of the Tay, in the possession of England, excepting Berwick. Before that often-disputed stronghold, Wallace drew up his forces, to commence a regular siege. The governor, intimidated by the powerful works which he saw the Scottish chief forming against the town, despatched a messenger to Edward with the tidings; not only praying for succours, but to inform him, that if he continued to refuse the peace for which the Scots fought, he would find it necessary to begin the conquest of the kingdom anew.

CHAPTER XLIV

BERWICK

While Wallace, accompanied by his brave friends, was thus carrying all before him from the Grampian to the Cheviot Hills, Bruce was rapidly recovering. His eager wishes seemed to heal his wounds; and on the tenth day after the departure of Wallace, he left that couch, which had been beguiled of its irksomeness by the smiling attentions of the tender Isabella. The ensuing Sabbath beheld him still more restored; and having imparted his intentions to the Lords Ruthven and Douglas, who were both with him, the next morning he joyfully buckled on his armour. Isabella, when she saw him thus clad, started, and the roses left her cheek. 'I am armed to be your guide, to Hunting-tower,' said he, with a look that showed her he read her thoughts. He then called for pen and ink, to write to Wallace. The reassured Isabella, rejoicing in the glad beams of his brightening eyes, held the standish. As he dipped his pen, he looked at her with a grateful tenderness that thrilled to her soul, and made her bend her blushing face, to hide emotions which whispered bliss in every beat of her happy heart. Thus, with a spirit wrapt in felicity; for victory hailed him from without, and love seemed to woo him to the dearest transports within; he wrote the following letter to Wallace:—

'I am now well, my best friend! This day I attend my lovely nurse, with her venerable guardian, to Hunting-tower. Eastward of Perth, almost every castle of consequence is yet filled by the Southrons, whom the folly of James Cummin allowed to reoccupy the places whence you had so lately driven them. I go to root them out; to emulate in the north, what you are now doing in the south! You shall see me again, when the banks of the Spey are as free as you have made the Forth. In all this, I am yet Thomas de Longueville. Isabella, the

sweet soother of my hours, knows me as no other; for would she not despise the unfamed Bruce! To deserve, and win her love, as De Longueville, and to marry her as King of Scotland, is the fond hope of your friend and brother Robert——. God speed me! and I shall send you despatches of my proceedings.'

Wallace had just made a successful attack upon the outworks of Berwick, when this letter was put into his hand. He was surrounded by his chieftains; and having read it, he informed them that Sir Thomas de Longueville was going to the Spey, to rid its castles of the enemy.

'The hopes of his enterprising spirit,' continued Wallace, 'are so seconded by his determination, I doubt not that what he promises, God, and the justice of our cause, will perform; and we may soon expect to hear, Scotland has no enemies in her Highlands.'

But in this hope, Wallace was disappointed. Day after day passed, and no tidings from the north. He became anxious; Bothwell and Edwin too, began to share his uneasiness. Continued successes against Berwick, had assured them of a speedy surrender, when unexpected succours being thrown in by sea, the confidence of the garrison became re-excited; and the ramparts appearing doubly manned, Wallace saw the only alternative was to surprise—take possession of the ships, and turn the siege into a blockade. Still trusting that Bruce would be prosperous in the Highlands, he calculated on full leisure to await the fall of Berwick upon this plan; and so much blood might be spared. Intent, and execution, were twin-born in the breast of Wallace. By a masterly stroke, he effected his design on the shipping; and having closed the Southrons within their walls, he despatched Lord Bothwell to Hunting-tower, to learn the state of military operations there; and above all, to bring back tidings of the Prince's health.

On the evening of the very day in which Murray left Berwick, a desperate sally was made by the garrison;

but they were beaten back with such effect, that Wallace gained possession of one of their most commanding towers. The contest did not end till night; and after passing a brief while in the council-tent, listening to the suggestions of his friends relative to the use that might be made of the new acquisition, he retired to his own quarters at a late hour. At these momentous periods he never seemed to need sleep; and seated at his table, settling the dispositions for the succeeding day, he marked not the time, till the flame of his exhausted lamp expired in the socket.—He replenished it; and had again resumed his military labours, when the curtain which covered the door of his tent was drawn aside and an armed man entered. Wallace looked up; and seeing that it was the Knight of the Green Plume, asked if anything had occurred from the town.

'Nothing,' replied the Knight, in an agitated voice, and seating himself beside Wallace. 'Any evil tidings from Perthshire?' demanded Wallace, who now hardly doubted that ill news had arrived of Bruce. 'None,' was the Knight's reply: 'but I am come to fulfil my promise to you; to unite myself for ever, heart and soul, to your destiny; or you behold me this night for the last time.' Surprised at this address, and the emotion which shook the frame of the unknown warrior, Wallace answered him with expressions of esteem, and added, 'If it depend on me, to unite so brave a man to my friendship for ever, only speak the word, declare your name, and I am ready to seal the compact.'—'My name,' returned the Knight, 'will indeed put these protestations to the proof. I have fought by your side, Sir William Wallace; I would have died at any moment, to have spared that breast a wound; and yet I dread to raise this visor, to show you who I am. A look will make me live, or blast me.'—'Your language confounds me, noble Knight,' replied Wallace; 'I know of no man living, saving the base violators of Lady Helen Mar's liberty, who need tremble

before my eyes. It is not possible, that either of these men is before me; and whoever you are, whatever you may have been, brave chief, your deeds have proved you worthy of a soldier's friendship, and I pledge you mine.'

The Knight was silent.—He took Wallace's hand—he grasped it;—the arms that held it, did indeed tremble. Wallace again spoke.—'What is the meaning of this? I am no tyrant, no monarch, to excite these dreads. I have a power to benefit, but none to injure.'—'To benefit, and to injure!' cried the Knight in a transport of emotion; 'you have my life in your hands. Oh! grant it, as you value your own happiness and honour! Look on me, and say whether I am to live or die.' As the warrior spoke, he cast himself impetuously on his knees, and threw open his visor. Wallace saw a fine but flushed face.—It was much overshadowed by the helmet. 'My friend,' said he, attempting to raise him by the hand which clasped his; 'your words are mysteries to me; and so little right can I have to the power you ascribe to me, that, although it seems to me as if I had seen your features before, yet——'

—'You forget me,' cried the Knight, starting on his feet, and throwing off his helmet to the ground: 'again look on this face, and stab me at once by a second declaration, that I am remembered no more!'

The countenance of Wallace now showed that he too well remembered it. He was pale and aghast. 'Lady Mar,' cried he, 'not expecting to see you under a warrior's casque—you will pardon me, that when so apparelled, I should not immediately recognise the widow of my friend.' She gasped for articulation; 'And is it thus,' cried she, 'you answer the sacrifices I have made for you? For you, I have committed an outrage on my nature; I have put on me this abhorrent steel: I have braved the dangers of many a hard-fought day; and all to guard your life! to convince you of a love unexampled in woman! and thus you recognise her, who has

risked honour and life for you—with coldness and reproach!'—'With neither, Lady Mar,' returned he; 'I am grateful for the generous motives of your conduct; but for the sake of the fair fame, you confess you have endangered; in respect to the memory of him whose name you bear, I cannot but wish, that so hazardous an instance of interest in me, had been left undone.'—'If that is all,' returned she, drawing towards him, 'it is in your power to ward from me every stigma! Who will dare to cast one reflection on my fair fame, when you bear testimony to my purity? Who will asperse the name of Mar, when you displace it with that of Wallace? Make me yours, dearest of men,' cried she, clasping his hands, 'and you will receive one to your heart, who never knew how to love before; who will be to you, what woman never yet was; and who will endow you with territories nearly equal to those of the King of Scotland. My father is no more; and now, as Countess of Strathearn and Princess of the Orkneys, I have it in my power to bring a sovereignty to your head, and the fondest of wives to your bosom.' As she vehemently spoke, and clung to Wallace, as if she had already a right to seek comfort within his arms, her tears and violent agitations so disconcerted him, that for a few moments he could not find a reply. This short endurance of her passion, aroused her almost drooping hopes; and, intoxicated with so rapturous an illusion, she threw off the little restraint in which her awe of Wallace's coldness had confined her, and flinging herself on his breast, poured forth all her love, and fond ambitions for him. In vain he attempted to interrupt her; to raise her with gentleness from her indecorous situation; she had no perception, but for the idea which had now taken possession of her heart; and, whispering him softly, said, 'Be but my husband, Wallace, and all rights shall perish, before my love, and your aggrandisement. In these arms, you shall bless the day you first saw Joanna of Strathearn!'

Lady Mar Attacks Wallace

She saw not, that every look and movement on her part, filled Wallace with aversion; and not, until he forcibly broke from her, did she doubt the success of her fond caresses.

'Lady Mar,' said he, 'I must repeat, that I am not ungrateful for the proofs of regard you have bestowed on me; but such excess of attachment is lavished upon a man that is a bankrupt in love. I am cold as monumental marble to every touch of that passion, to which I was once but too entirely devoted. Bereaved of the object, I am punished; thus is my heart doomed to solitude on earth, for having made an idol of the angel, that was sent to cheer my path to heaven.'

In a paroxysm of despair, she dashed the hand she held, far from her; and standing proudly on her feet—'Hear me, thou man of stone!' cried she, 'and answer me on your life and honour; for both depend on your reply: Is Joanna of Strathearn to be your wife?'

'Cease to urge me, unhappy lady,' returned Wallace; 'you already know the decision of this ever-widowed heart.' Lady Mar looked steadfastly at him: 'Then receive my last determination!' and drawing near him, with a desperate and portentous countenance, as if she meant to whisper in his ear, she suddenly plucked St. Louis's dagger from his girdle, and struck it into his breast. He caught the hand which grasped the hilt. Her eyes glared with the fury of a maniac, and, with a horrid laugh, she exclaimed, 'I have slain thee, insolent triumpher in my love and agonies!—Thou shalt not now deride me in the arms of thy minion; for, I know, that it is not for the dead Marion you have trampled on my heart, but for the living Helen!' As she spoke, he moved her hold from the dagger, and drew the weapon from the wound. A torrent of blood flowed over his vest, and stained the hand that grasped hers. She turned of a deadly paleness, but a demoniac joy still gleamed in her eyes. 'Lady Mar,' cried he, while he thrust the thickness

of his scarf into the wound, 'I pardon this outrage. Go in peace; and I shall never breathe to man, nor woman, the occurrences of this night. Only remember, that with regard to Lady Helen, my wishes are as pure as her own innocence.'—'So they may be now, vainly boasting, immaculate Wallace!' answered she, with bitter derision; 'men are saints, when their passions are satisfied. Think not to impose on her, who knows how this vestal Helen followed you in page's attire, and without one stigma being cast on her maiden delicacy. I am not to learn the days, and the nights, she passed alone with you in the woods of Normandy!—Did you not follow her to France? —Did you not tear her from the arms of Lord Aymer de Valence? and now, relinquishing her yourself, you leave a dishonoured bride to cheat the vows of some honester man!—Wallace, I now know you; and as I have been fool enough to love you beyond all woman's love, I swear by the powers of heaven and hell, to make you feel the weight of woman's hatred!'

Her denunciations had no effect on Wallace: but her slander against her unoffending daughter-in-law, agitated him with an indignation that almost dispossessed him of himself. In hurried and vehement words, he denied all that she had alleged against Helen; and appealed to the whole court of France, to witness her spotless innocence. Lady Mar exulted in this emotion, though every sentence, by the interest it displayed in its object, seemed to establish the truth of a suspicion, which she had at first only uttered from the vague workings of her revenge. Triumphing in the belief that he had found another as frail as herself; and yet maddened that another should have been preferred before her, her jealous pride blazed into redoubled flame. 'Swear,' cried she, 'till I see the blood of that false heart, forced to my feet; and still I shall believe the base daughter of Mar, a wanton. I go, not to proclaim her dishonour to the world, but to deprive her of her lover; to yield the rebel Wallace into the

hands of justice! When on the scaffold, proud exulter in those, by me, now detested beauties, remember that it was Joanna of Strathearn who laid thy matchless head upon the block; who consigned those limbs, of Heaven's own statuary, to decorate the spires of Scotland! Remember, that my curse pursues you, here, and hereafter!' A livid fire seemed to dart from her scornful eyes; her countenance was torn, as by some internal fiend; and, with the last malediction thundering from her tongue, she darted from his sight.

Next morning Wallace was recalled from the confusion into which his nocturnal visitor had thrown his mind, by the entrance of Ker, who came as usual with the reports of the night. In the course of the communication, he mentioned, that about three hours before sunrise, the Knight of the Green Plume had left the camp with his despatches for Stirling. Wallace was scarcely surprised at this ready falsehood of Lady Mar's; and not intending to betray her, he merely said, 'Long ere he appears again, I hope we shall have good tidings from our friends in the north.'

But day succeeded day, and notwithstanding Bothwell's embassy, no accounts arrived. The Countess had left an emissary in the Scottish camp, who did as she had done before, intercept all messengers from Perthshire.

Though Wallace heard the denunciation with which she left his presence, yet he did not conceive it was more than the evanescent rage of disappointed passion; and, anticipating persecutions, rather from her love than her revenge, he was relieved, and not alarmed, by the intelligence that the Knight of the Green Plume had really taken his departure.

Wallace hourly anticipated the surrender of the enemy. Reduced for want of provisions, and seeing all succours cut off by the seizure of the fleet, the inhabitants, detesting their new rulers, collected in bands; and lying in wait for the soldiers of the garrison, murdered them secretly, and in great numbers. But here the evil did not end;

for by the punishments which the governor thought proper to inflict by lots on the guilty, or the guiltless (he not being able to discover who were actually the assassins), the distress of the town was augmented to a horrible degree. Such a state of things could not be long maintained. Aware that should he continue in the fortress, his troops must assuredly perish, either by insurrection within, or from the enemy without, the Southron commander determined no longer to wait the appearance of a relief which might never arrive; and to stop the internal confusion, he sent a flag of truce to Wallace, accepting and signing his offered terms of capitulation. By this deed, he engaged to open the gates at sunset; but begged the interval, between noon and that hour, to allow him time to settle the animosity between his men and the people, before he should surrender his brave followers entirely into the hands of the Scots.

Having despatched his assent to this request of the governor's, Wallace retired to his own tent. That he had effected his purpose, without the carnage which must have ensued had he again stormed the place, gratified his humanity; and congratulating himself on such a termination of the siege, he turned with more than usual cheerfulness towards a herald, who brought him a packet from the north. The man withdrew, and Wallace broke the seal; but what was his astonishment, to find it a citation for himself to repair immediately to Stirling; 'to answer,' it said, 'certain charges brought against him, by an authority too illustrious to be set aside without examination!' He had hardly read this extraordinary mandate, when Sir Simon Fraser, his second in command, entered; and, with consternation in his looks, put an open letter into his hand. It ran as follows:—

'Sir Simon Fraser—Allegations of treason against the liberties of Scotland, having been preferred against Sir William Wallace; until he clears himself of these charges,

to the abthanes of Scotland here assembled, you, Sir Simon Fraser, are directed to assume, in his stead, the command of the forces which form the blockade of Berwick; and, as the first act of your duty, you are ordered to send the accused towards Stirling, under a strong guard —within an hour after you receive this despatch.

(Signed) 'John Cummin,
'Earl of Badenoch, Lord Regent of Scotland.
'*Stirling Castle.*'

Wallace returned the letter to Fraser with an undisturbed countenance: 'I have received a similar order from the Regent,' said he; 'and though I cannot guess the source whence these accusations spring, I fear not to meet them, and shall require no guard to speed me forward to the scene of my defence. I am ready to go, my friend; and happy to resign the brave garrison, that has just surrendered, to your honour and lenity.' Fraser answered, that he should be emulous to follow his example in all things, and to abide by his agreements with the Southron governor. He then retired, to prepare the army for the departure of their commander; and much against his feelings, to call out the escort that was to attend the calumniated chief to Stirling.

When the marshal of the army read to the officers and men the orders of the Regent, a speechless consternation seized on one part of the troops, and as violent an indignation agitated the other to tumult. The veterans, who had followed the chief of Ellerslie, from the first hour of his appearing as a patriot in arms, could not brook this aspersion upon their leader's honour; and had it not been for the vehement exhortations of the no less incensed, though more moderate, Scrymgeour and Lockhart, they would have risen in instant revolt. Though persuaded to sheath their half-drawn swords, they could not be withheld from immediately quitting the field, and marching directly to Wallace's tent.

It was at this moment that the tumultuous approach of the Lanark veterans was heard from without. The whole band rushed into the tent; and Stephen Ireland, who was foremost, raising his voice above the rest, exclaimed, 'They are the traitors, my Lord, who accuse you! It is determined, by our corrupted thanes, that Scotland shall be sacrificed; and you are to be made the first victim. Think they, then, that we will obey such parricides? Lead us on, thou only worthy of the name of Regent, and we will hurl these usurpers from their thrones.'

This demand was reiterated by every man present; was echoed by hundreds, who surrounded the tent. The Bothwell-men and Ramsay's followers, joined the men of Lanark; and the mutiny against the orders of the Regent became general. Wallace walked out into the open field, and mounting his horse, rode forth amongst them. At sight of him the air resounded with acclamations, unceasingly proclaiming him their only leader; but, stretching out his arm to them, in token of silence, they became profoundly still. 'My friends, and brother soldiers,' cried he; 'as you value the honour of William Wallace,—as you have hitherto done, at this moment yield him implicit obedience.' —'For ever!' shouted the Bothwell-men.—'We never will obey any other!' rejoined his faithful Lanark followers; and, with an increased uproar, they demanded to be led to Stirling. His extended hand again stilled the storm, and he resumed: 'You shall go with me to Stirling, but as my friends only; never as the enemies of the Regent of Scotland. I am charged with treason: it is his duty to try me by the laws of my country: it is mine, to submit to the inquisition.—I fear it not, and I invite you to accompany me; not to brand me with infamy, by passing between my now darkened honour and the light of justice; not to avenge an iniquitous sentence, denounced on a guiltless man; but to witness my acquittal; and, in that, my triumph over them, who, through my breast, would strike at what is greater than I.'

CHAPTER XLV

STIRLING CASTLE

WALLACE entered on the Carse of Stirling, that scene of his many victories, and beheld its northern horizon white with tents. Officers, appointed for the purpose, had apprised the abthanes of Wallace having left Berwick; and knowing by the same means all his movements, an armed cavalcade met him near the Carron; to hold his followers in awe, and to conduct him without opposition to Stirling. It was then night. In the morning, at an early hour, Wallace was summoned before the council in the citadel.

On his re-entrance into that room, which he had left, the dictator of the kingdom, when every knee bent, and every head bowed to his supreme mandate, he found not one who even greeted his appearance with the commonest ceremony of courtesy. Badenoch, the Regent, sat upon the throne, with evident symptoms of being yet an invalid. The Lords Athol and Buchan, and the numerous chiefs of the clans of Cummin, were seated on his right: on his left were arranged the Earls of Fife and Lorn, Lord Soulis, and every Scottish baron of power, who at any time had shown himself hostile to Wallace. Others, who were of easy faith to a tale of malice, sat with them: and the rest of the assembly was filled up with men of better families than personal fame; and whose names swelled a list, without adding any true importance to the side on which they appeared. A few, and those a very few, who still respected Wallace, were present; not because they were sent for (great care having been taken not to summon his friends), but in consequence of a rumour of the charge having reached them: and these were, the Lords Lennox and Loch-awe, with Kirkpatrick, and two or three chieftains from the western Highlands. None of them had arrived till within a few minutes of the council being

opened; and Wallace was entering at one door as they appeared at the other.

At sight of him, a low whisper buzzed through the hall; and a marshal took the plumed bonnet from his hand, which out of respect to the nobility of Scotland, he had raised from his head at his entrance. A herald, meanwhile, proclaimed, in a loud voice, 'Sir William Wallace! you are charged with treason;—and, by an ordinance of Fergus the First, you must stand uncovered before the representative of the majesty of Scotland, until that loyalty be proved, which would again restore you to a seat amongst her faithful barons.'

Wallace, with the same equanimity, as that with which he would have mounted the regal chair, bowed his head to the marshal, in token of acquiescence. But Edwin, whose indignation was reawakened at this exclusion of his friend from the privilege of his birth, said something so warm to the marshal, that Wallace, in a low voice, was obliged to check his vehemence, by a declaration—that, however obsolete the custom, and revived in his case only, it was his determination to submit himself in every respect, to whatever was exacted of him by the laws of his country.

On Loch-awe, and Lennox, observing him stand thus, before the bonneted and seated chiefs, (a stretch of magisterial prerogative, which had not been exercised on a Scottish knight for many a century,) they took off their caps, and bowing to Wallace, refused to occupy their places on the benches, while the defender of Scotland stood. Kirkpatrick drew eagerly towards him, and throwing down his casque and sword at his feet, cried in a loud voice, 'Lie there, till the only true man in all this land commands me to take ye up in his defence. He alone had courage to look the Southrons in the face, and to drive their king over the borders, while his present accusers skulked in their chains!' Wallace regarded this ebullition from the heart of the honest veteran, with a look that was

eloquent to all. He would have animatedly praised such an instance of fearless gratitude expressed to another; and when it was directed to himself, his ingenuous soul showed approbation, in every feature of his beaming countenance.

'Is it thus, presumptuous knight of Ellerslie?' cried Soulis, 'that by your looks, you dare encourage contumely to the Lord Regent, and his peers?' Wallace did not deign him an answer, but turning calmly towards the throne, 'Representative of my king!' said he, 'in duty to the power whose authority you wear, I have obeyed your summons; and I here await the appearance of the accuser, who has had the hardihood to brand the name of William Wallace with disloyalty to prince or people.'

The Regent was embarrassed. He did not suffer his eyes to meet those of Wallace, but looked down in manifest confusion during this address; and then, without reply, turned to Lord Athol, and called on him to open the charge. Athol required not a second summons; he rose immediately; and, in a bold and positive manner, accused Wallace, of having been won over by Philip of France, to sell those rights of supremacy to him, which, with a feigned patriotism, his sword had wrested from the grasp of England. For this treachery, Philip was to endow him with the sovereignty of Scotland; and, as a pledge of the compact, he had invested him with the principality of Gascony in France. 'This is the groundwork of his treason,' continued Athol; 'but the superstructure is to be cemented with our blood. I have seen a list in his own hand-writing, of those chiefs whose lives are to pave his way to the throne.'

At this point of the charge, Edwin sprang forward; but Wallace perceiving the intent of his movement, caught him by the arm and, by a look, reminded him of his recently repeated engagement to keep silent.

'Produce the list,' cried Lord Lennox. 'No evidence, that does not bring proof to our eyes, ought to have any

weight with us against the man who has bled in every vein for Scotland.'—'It shall be brought to your eyes,' returned Athol; 'that, and other damning proofs, shall convince this credulous country, of its abused confidence.' —'I see these damning proofs now!' cried Kirkpatrick, who had frowningly listened to Athol; 'the abusers of my country's confidence, betray themselves at this moment, by their eagerness to impeach her friends; and, I pray Heaven, that before they mislead others into so black a conspiracy, the lie in their throats may choke its inventors!' —'We all know,' cried Athol, turning on Kirkpatrick, 'to whom you belong. You were bought, with the shameless grant to mangle the body of the slain Cressingham; a deed, which has brought a stigma on the Scottish name, never to be erased but by the disgrace of its perpetrators. For this savage triumph did you sell yourself to William Wallace; and a bloody champion you are, always ready, for your secretly murderous master!'

'Hear you this, and bear it?' cried Kirkpatrick, and Edwin, in one breath, and grasping their daggers; Edwin's flashed in his hand. 'Seize them!' cried Athol; 'my life is threatened by his myrmidons.'—Marshals instantly approached; but Wallace, who had hitherto stood in silent dignity, turned to them, with that tone of justice which had ever commanded from his lips, and bade them forbear:—'Touch these knights, at your peril, marshals!' said he: 'No man in this chamber is above the laws; and they protect every Scot who resents unjust aspersions upon his own character, or irrelevant, and prejudicing attacks on that of an arraigned friend. It is before the majesty of the law, that I now stand; but were injury to usurp its place, not all the lords in Scotland should detain me a moment, in a scene so unworthy of my country.' The marshals retreated; for they had been accustomed to regard with implicit deference the opinion of Sir William Wallace on the laws; and though he now stood in the light of their violator, yet memory bore testimony, that

he had always read them aright; and, to this hour, had ever appeared to make them the guide of his actions.

Athol saw that none in the assembly had courage to enforce this act of violence; and blazing with fury, he poured his whole wrath upon Wallace: 'Imperious, arrogant traitor!' cried he: 'this presumption only deepens our impression of your guilt!—Demean yourself with more reverence to this august court, or expect to be sentenced on the proof which such insolence amply gives; we require no other, to proclaim your domineering spirit; and at once to condemn you as the premeditated tyrant of our land.'—'Lord Athol,' replied Wallace, 'what is just, I would say in the face of all the courts in Christendom. It is not in the power of man to make me silent, when I see the laws of my country outraged, and my countrymen oppressed. Though I may submit my own cheek to the blow, I will not permit theirs to share the stroke. I have answered you, Earl, to this point, and am ready to hear you to the end.'

Athol resumed:—'I am not your only accuser, proudly-confident man: you shall see one, whose truth cannot be doubted; and whose first glance will bow that haughty spirit, and cover that bold front with the livery of shame! My Lord,' cried he, turning to the Regent, 'I shall bring a most illustrious witness before you; one who will prove on oath, that it was the intention of this arch-hypocrite, this angler for women's hearts, this perverter of men's understandings—before another moon, to bury deep in blood the very people whom he now insidiously affects to protect! But to open your and the nation's eyes at once; to overwhelm him with his fate; I now call forth the evidence.'

The marshals opened a door in the side of the hall, and led a lady forward, habited in regal splendour, and covered from head to foot with a veil of so transparent a texture, that her costly apparel and majestic contour were distinctly seen through it. She was conducted to a chair

on an elevated platform a few paces from where Wallace stood. On her being seated, the Regent rose, and in a tremulous voice addressed her:—

'Joanna, Countess of Strathearn and Mar, Princess of the Orkneys, we adjure thee, by thy princely dignity, and in the name of the King of kings, to bear a just witness to the truth or falsehood of the charges of treason and conspiracy now brought against Sir William Wallace.'

The name of his accuser made Wallace start: and the sight of her unblushing face, for she threw aside her veil the moment she was addressed, overspread his cheek with a tinge of that shame for her, which she was now too hardened in determined crime to feel herself.[1] Edwin gazed at her in speechless horror; while she, casting a glance on Wallace, in which the full purpose of her soul was declared, turned, with a softened though majestic air, to the Regent, and spoke:—

'My Lord,' said she, 'you see before you a woman, who never knew what it was to feel a self-reproachful pang, till an evil hour brought her to receive an obligation from that insidious, treacherous man. But as my first passion has ever been the love of my country, I will prove it to this good assembly, by making a confession of what was once my heart's weakness; and by that candour, I trust they will fully honour the rest of my narrative.'

A clamour of approbation resounded through the hall. Lennox and Loch-awe looked on each other with amazement. Kirkpatrick, recollecting the scenes at Dumbarton, exclaimed—'Jezebel!'—but the ejaculation was lost in the general burst of applause; and the Countess opening a folded paper, which she held in her hand, in a calm, collected voice, but with a flushing cheek, resumed:—

'I shall read my further deposition. I have written it, that my memory might not err, and that my country

[1] The treasonable crimes of this wicked woman are truly verified in the Scottish history.

may be unquestionably satisfied of the accuracy of every syllable I utter.'

She paused an instant, drew a quick breath, and proceeded, reading from the paper, thus:—(But as occasions occurred for particularly pointing its contents, she turned her tutored eye upon the object, to look a signet on her mischief.)

'I am not to tell you, my Lord, that Sir William Wallace twice released the late Earl of Mar and myself from Southron captivity. Our deliverer was, what you see him: fraught with attractions, which he too successfully directed against the peace of a young woman, married to a man of paternal years. While to all the rest of the world, he seemed to consecrate himself to the memory of his ill-fated wife, to me alone he unveiled his straying heart. I revered my nuptial vow too sincerely, to listen to him with the complacency he wished: but, I blush to own, that his tears, his agonies of love, his manly graces, and the virtues I believed he possessed, (for well he knows to feign!) co-operating with my gratitude, at last wrought such a change in my breast that—I became wretched. No guilty wish was there; but an admiration of him, a pity which undermined my health, and left me miserable! I forbade him to approach me. I tried to wrest him from my memory; and nearly had succeeded, when I was informed by my late husband's nephew,—(the youth who now stands beside Sir William Wallace,)—that he was returned under an assumed name from France. Then I feared that all my inward struggles were to recommence. I had once conquered myself: for abhorring the estrangement of my thoughts from my wedded lord; when he died, I only yearned to appease my conscience; and in penance for my involuntary crime, I refused Sir William Wallace my hand. His return to Scotland filled me with tumults, which only they who would sacrifice all they prize, to a sense of duty, can know. Edwin Ruthven left me at Hunting-tower; and, that very evening, while

walking alone in the garden, I was surprised by the sudden approach of an armed man. He threw a scarf over my head, to prevent my screams, but I fainted with terror. He then took me from the garden by the way he had entered, and placing me on a horse before him, carried me,—whither I know not! but on my recovery I found myself in a chamber, with a woman standing beside me, and the same warrior. His visor was so closed that I could not see his face. On my expressing alarm at my situation, he addressed me in French, telling me he had provided a man to carry an excuse to Hunting-tower, to prevent pursuit; and then he put a letter into my hand, which, he said, he brought from Sir William Wallace. Anxious to know the purpose of this act; and believing that a man who had sworn to me devoted love, could not premeditate a more serious outrage, I broke the seal, and, nearly as I can recollect, read to this effect:—

'He told me, that as he had often read in my blushes, the sympathy which my too severe virtue made me conceal,—he would now wrest me from my cheerless widowhood; and having nothing in reality to reproach myself with, compel me to be happy. His friend, the only confidant of his love, had brought me to a spot, whence I could not fly: there I should remain, till he, Wallace, could leave the army for a few days; and throwing himself on my compassion and tenderness, be received as the most faithful of lovers, the fondest of husbands.

'This letter,' continued the Countess, 'was followed by many others; and suffice it to say, that the latent affection in my heart, and his subduing love, were too powerful in his cause. How his letters were conveyed, I know not; but they were duly presented to me by the woman who attended me. At last the knight who had brought me to the place, and who wore green armour, and a green plume, reappeared.'—'Prodigious villain!' broke from the lips of Edwin. The Countess turned her eye on him for a moment, and then resumed: 'He was the warrior

who had borne me from Hunting-tower; and from that hour until the period I now speak of, I had never seen him. He put another packet into my hand; desiring me to peruse it with attention, and return Sir William Wallace a verbal answer by him. Yes! was all he required. I retired to open it; and what was my horror, when I read a perfect development of the treasons for which he is now brought to account!—By some mistake of my character, he had conceived me to be ambitious; and knowing himself to be the master of my heart, he fancied himself lord of my conscience also. He wrote, that until he saw me, he had no other end in his exertions for Scotland, than her rescue from a foreign yoke; "but," added he, "from the moment in which I first beheld my adored Joanna, I aspired to place a crown on her brows!" He then told me, that he did not deem the time of its presentation to him on the Carse of Stirling, a safe juncture for its acceptance; neither was he tempted to run the risk of maintaining an unsteady throne, when I was not free to partake it; but since the death of Lord Mar, every wish, every hope was re-awakened ; and then he determined to become a king. Philip of France had made secret articles with him to that end. He was to hold Scotland of him. While to make the surrender of his country's independence sure to Philip, and its sceptre to himself and his posterity; he attempted to persuade me there would be no crime in destroying the chiefs, whose names he enrolled in this list. The Pope, he added, would absolve me from a transgression dictated by connubial duty; and, on our bridal day, he proposed the deed should be done. He would invite all these lords to a feast; and poison, or the dagger, should lay them at his feet.

'So impious a proposal restored me to myself. My love at once turned to the most decided abhorrence: and hastening to the Knight of the Green Plume, I told him to carry my resolution to his master; that I would never see him more, till I should appear as his accuser before

the tribunal of his country. The knight tried to dissuade me from my purpose, but in vain: and, at last, becoming alarmed at the punishment which might overtake himself as the agent of such treason, he confessed to me, that the scene of his first appearance at Linlithgow was devised by Wallace; who, unknown to all others, had brought him from France, to assist him in the scheme he durst not confide to Scotland's friends. If I would guarantee his life, he offered to take me from the place where I was then confined, and convey me safe to Stirling. All else that he asked, was, that I would allow him to be the bearer of the casket which contained Sir William Wallace's letters; and suffer my eyes to be blindfolded during the first part of our journey. This I consented to; but the murderous list I had undesignedly put into my bosom.—My head was again wrapped in a thick veil, and we set out. It was very dark; and we travelled long and swiftly, till we came to a wood. There was neither moon, nor stars, to point out any habitation. But being overcome with fatigue, my conductor persuaded me to dismount and take rest. I slept beneath the trees. In the morning when I awoke, I in vain looked round for the knight, and called him; he was gone; and I saw him no more. I then explored my way to Stirling;—to warn my country of its danger;—to unmask to the world, the direst hypocrite that ever prostituted the name of virtue.'

The Countess ceased; and a hundred voices broke out at once, pouring invectives on the traitorous ambition of Sir William Wallace; and invoking the Regent to pass some signal condemnation on so monstrous a crime. In vain Kirkpatrick thundered forth his indignant soul; he was unheard in the tumult: but going up to the Countess, he accused her to her face, of falsehood; and charged her with a design, from some really treasonable motive, to destroy the only sure hope of her country.

'And will you not speak?' cried Edwin, in agony of spirit clasping Wallace's arm; 'will you not speak, before

these ungrateful men shall dare to brand your ever honoured name, with infamy?—Make yourself be heard, my noblest friend! Confute that wicked woman, who too surely has proved what I suspected,—that this self-concealing knight, came to be a traitor.'—'I will speak, my Edwin,' returned Wallace, 'at the proper moment; but not in this tumult of my enemies.—Rely on it, your friend will submit to no unjust decree.'

'Where is this Knight of the Green Plume?' cried Lennox, almost startled in his opinion of Wallace, by the consistency of the Countess's narrative. 'No mark of dishonour, shall be passed on Sir William Wallace, without the strictest scrutiny. Let the mysterious stranger be found, and confronted with Lady Strathearn.' Notwithstanding the Earl's insisting on impartial justice, she perceived the doubt in his countenance, and eager to maintain her advantage, replied—'The knight, I fear, has fled beyond our search.'

'No,' cried Loch-awe; 'if the Knight of the Green Plume be above ground, he shall be brought before this tribunal. He alone can be the traitor; and to destroy us, by exciting suspicions against our best defender, he has wrought with his own false pen, this device, to deceive the patriotic widow of the Earl of Mar.'—'No, no,' interrupted she; 'I read the whole in his own, to me too well known handwriting; and this list of the chiefs, condemned by yon, indeed traitor! to die, shall fully evince his guilt. Even your name, too generous Earl, is in the horrid catalogue.' —While she spoke, she rose eagerly, to hand to him the scroll.

'Let me now speak, or stab me to the heart!' hastily whispered Edwin, to his friend. Wallace did not withhold him, for he guessed what would be the remark of his ardent soul. 'Hear that woman!' cried the vehement youth, to the Regent, 'and say, whether she now speaks the language of one who had ever loved the virtues of Sir William Wallace? Were she innocent of malice

towards the deliverer of Scotland, would she not have rejoiced in Loch-awe's suggestion, that the Green Knight is the traitor?—Or, if that scroll, she has now given into the Regent's hand, be too nicely forged, for her to detect its not being indeed the hand-writing of the noblest of men; would she not have shown some sorrow, at least, at being obliged to maintain the guilt of one, she professes once to have loved?—Of one who saved herself, her husband, and her child, from perishing!—But here her malice has overstepped her art; and after having promoted the success of her tale, by so mingling insignificant truths, with falsehoods of capital import—that in acknowledging the one, we seem to grant the other;— she falls into her own snare!—even a beardless boy can now discern, that, however vile the Green Knight may be, she shares his wickedness!'

While Edwin spoke, Lady Strathearn's countenance underwent a thousand changes. Twice she attempted to rise and interrupt him; but Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, having fixed his eyes on her with a menacing determination to prevent her, she found herself obliged to remain quiescent. Full of a newly excited fear, that Wallace had confided to her nephew the last scene in his tent, she started up as he seemed to pause, and, with assumed mildness, again addressing the Regent, said—that before this apparently ingenuous defence, could mislead impartial minds, she thought it just to inform the council, of the infatuated attachment of Edwin Ruthven to the accused; for she had ample cause to assert, that the boy was so bewitched by his commander,— who had flattered his youthful vanity, by loading him with distinctions only due to approved valour in manhood,—that he was ready at any time to sacrifice every consideration of truth, reason and duty, to please Sir William Wallace.

'Such may be, in a boy;' observed Lord Loch-awe, interrupting her; 'but as I know no occasion in which it is possible for Sir William Wallace to falsify the truth, I

call upon him, in justice to himself and to his country, to reply to three questions!'—Wallace bowed to the venerable Earl, and he proceeded—'Sir William Wallace, are you guilty of the charge brought against you, of a design to mount the throne of Scotland by means of the King of France?'

Wallace replied, 'I never designed to mount the throne of Scotland, either by my own means, or by any other man's.'

Loch-awe proceeded: 'Was this scroll, containing the names of certain Scottish chiefs, noted down for assassination, written by you, or under your connivance?'

'I never saw the scroll, nor heard of the scroll, until this hour. And harder than death is the pang at my heart, when a Scottish chief finds it necessary to ask me such a question, regarding a people, to save, even the least of whom, he has so often seen me risk my life!'

'Another question,' replied Loch-awe; 'and then, bravest of men, if your country acquits you not in thought and deed, Campbell of Loch-awe sits no more amongst its judges!—What is your knowledge of the Knight of the Green Plume; that, in preference to any Scottish friend, you should intrust him with your wishes respecting the Countess of Strathearn?'

Wallace's answer was brief: 'I never had any wishes respecting the wife, or the widow of my friend the Earl of Mar, that I did not impart to every chief in the camp; and those wishes went no further than for her safety. As to love, that is a passion I shall know no more; and Lady Strathearn alone can say, what is the end she aims at, by attributing feelings to me with regard to her, which I never conceived,—and words, which I never uttered. Like this passion, with which she says she inspired me,' added he, turning his eyes steadfastly on her face, 'was the Knight of the Green Plume!—You are all acquainted with the manner of his introduction to me at Linlithgow. By the account that he then gave of himself, you all

know as much of him as I did; till on the night that he left me at Berwick,—and then I found him—like this story of Lady Strathearn, all a fable.'

'What is his proper title?—Name him, on your knighthood!' exclaimed Buchan; 'for he shall yet be dragged forth, to support the veracity of my illustrious kinswoman; and to fully unmask his insidious accomplice!'

'Your kinswoman, Earl Buchan,' replied Wallace, 'can best answer your question.'

Lord Athol approached the Regent, and whispered something in his ear. This unworthy representative of the generous Bruce, immediately rose from his seat; 'Sir William Wallace,' said he, 'you have replied to the questions of Lord Loch-awe; but where are your witnesses, to prove that what you have spoken is the truth?'

Wallace was struck with surprise at this address from a man, who, whatever might be demanded of him in the fulfilment of his office, he believed could not be otherwise than his friend; because, from the confidence reposed in him both by Bruce and himself, he must be fully aware of the impossibility of these allegations being true. But Wallace's astonishment was only for a moment; he now saw with an eye, that pierced through the souls of the whole assembly; and, with collected firmness, he replied,—'My witnesses are in the bosom of every Scotsman.'

'I cannot find them in mine,' interrupted Athol.—'Nor in mine!' was echoed from various parts of the hall.

'Invalidate the facts brought against you, by legal evidence, not a mere rhetorical appeal, Sir William Wallace,' added the Regent, 'else the sentence of the law must be passed on so tacit an acknowledgment of guilt.'

'Acknowledgment of guilt!' cried Wallace, with a flush of godlike indignation suffusing his noble brow. 'If any one of the chiefs who have just spoken, knew the beat of an honest heart, they would not have declared that they heard no voice proclaim the integrity of William Wallace.—Let them look out on yon Carse, where they

saw me refuse that crown, offered by themselves, which my accuser alleges I would yet obtain by their blood.—Let them remember the banks of the Clyde, where I rejected the Scottish throne offered me by Edward! Let these facts bear witness for me; and, if they be insufficient, look on Scotland, now, for the third time, rescued by my arm from the grasp of an usurper!—That scroll locks the door of the kingdom upon her enemies.' As he spoke, he threw the capitulation of Berwick upon the table. It struck a pause into the minds of the Lords; they gazed, with pallid countenances, and without a word, on the parchment where it lay, while he proceeded—'If my actions, that you see, do not convince you of my integrity; then believe the unsupported evidence of words, the tale of a woman, whose mystery, were it not for the memory of the honourable man whose name she once bore, I would publicly unravel:—believe her! and leave Wallace nought of his country to remember, but that he has served it, and that it is unjust!'

'Noblest of Scots!' cried Loch-awe, coming towards him, 'did your accuser come in the shape of an angel of light, still we should believe your life, in preference to her testimony; for God Himself speaks on your side.—"My servants," He declares, "shall be known by their fruits!" And have not yours been peace to Scotland, and good-will to men!'—'They are the serpent folds of his hypocrisy!' cried Athol, alarmed at the awe-struck looks of the assembly.—'They are the baits, by which he cheats fools!' re-echoed Soulis. 'They are snares, which shall catch us more!' was now the general exclamation; and in proportion to the transitory respect, which had made them bow, though but for a moment to virtue—they now vociferated their contempt, both of Wallace, and this his last achievement. Inflamed with rage at the manifest determination to misjudge his commander, and maddened at the contumely with which their envy affected to treat him, Kirkpatrick threw off all restraint,

and with the bitterness of his reproaches, still more incensed the jealousy of the nobles, and augmented the tumult. Lennox, vainly attempting to make himself heard, drew towards Wallace; hoping by that movement, to at least show on whose side he thought justice lay. At this moment, while the uproar raged with redoubled clamour; the one party denouncing the Cummins, as the source of this conspiracy against the life of Wallace; the other demanding, that sentence should instantly be passed upon him as a traitor; the door burst open, and Bothwell, covered with dust, and followed by a throng of armed knights, rushed into the centre of the hall.

'Who is it ye arraign?' cried the young chief, looking indignantly around him. 'Is it not your deliverer, you would destroy? Falsest of thy sex!' cried he, turning to the Countess, who shrunk before the penetrating eyes of Andrew Murray;—'do I not know thee? You would destroy the man you could not seduce! Wallace!' cried he, 'speak. Would not this woman have persuaded you to disgrace the name of Mar? When my uncle died, did she not urge you to intrigue for that crown, which she knew you had so loyally declined?'—'My errand here,' answered Wallace, 'is to defend myself, not to accuse others. I have shown that I am innocent, and my judges will not look on the proofs. They obey not the laws, in their judgment; and whatever may be the decree, I shall not acknowledge its authority.' As he spoke, he turned away, and walked with a firm step out of the hall.

His disappearance gave the signal for a tumult, more threatening to the welfare of the state, than if the armies of Edward had been in the midst of them. It was brother against brother, friend against friend. The Lords Lennox, Bothwell, and Loch-awe, were vehement against the unfairness with which Sir William Wallace had been treated; Kirkpatrick declared, that no arguments could be used with men, so devoid of reason; and words of reproach and reviling, passing on all sides, swords were

fiercely drawn. The Countess of Strathearn, seeing herself neglected by even her friends in the strife, and fearful that the party of Wallace might at last gain the ascendency; and that herself, then without her traitor corslet on her breast, might meet their hasty vengeance, rose abruptly, and giving her hand to a herald, hurried out of the assembly.

The marshals with difficulty interrupted the mortal attack, which the enemies and friends of Wallace made on each other; several of the Cummins were maimed; Lord Athol himself was severely wounded by Kirkpatrick; but the treacherous Regent gladly saw that none on his side were hurt unto death. With horrid menaces, the two parties separated; the one, to the Regent's apartments: the other to the camp of Wallace.

Lord Bothwell found him encircled by this veterans; in whose breasts he was trying to allay the storm raging there against the injustice of the Regent, and the ingratitude of the Scottish Lords. At sight of the young and ardent Bothwell, their clamour to be led instantly to revenge the indignity offered to their general, redoubled; and Murray, not less incensed, turning to them exclaimed, —'Yes, my friends, keep quiet for a few hours, and then, what honour commands, we will do!' At this assurance they retired to their quarters; and Bothwell turned with Wallace into his tent.

'Before you utter a word concerning the present scenes,' cried Wallace, 'tell me, how is the hope of Scotland? the only earthly stiller of these horrid tumults!'—'Alas!' replied Bothwell. 'After regaining, by a valour worthy of his destiny, every fortress north of the Forth, his last and greatest achievement, was making himself master of Scone; but in storming its walls, a fragment of stone falling heavily, terribly rent the muscles of his breast; and now—woe to Scotland!—he now lies at Hunting-tower reduced to infant weakness. All this you would have known, had you received his letters; but villainy must

have been widely at work; for none of yours have reached his hands.' This intelligence respecting Bruce, was a more mortal blow to Wallace, than all he had just sustained in his own person. He remained silent; but his mind was thronged with thoughts. Was Scotland to be indeed lost? —Was all that he had suffered, and achieved, to have been done in vain? and should he be fated to behold her again made a sacrifice to the jealous rivalry of her selfish and contending nobles?

Bothwell continued to speak of the Prince; and added, that it was with reluctance he had left him, even to share the anticipated success at Berwick. But Bruce, impatient to learn the issue of the siege (as still no letters arrived from that quarter,) had despatched him back to the borders. At Dunfermline, he was stricken with horror by the information, that treason had been alleged against Wallace; and turning his steps westward, he flew to give that support to his friend's innocence, which the malignity of his enemies might render needful.

The issue showed that Bothwell was not mistaken. The majority of the Scottish nobles envied Wallace his glory, and hated him for that virtue, which drew the eyes of the people to compare him with their selfish courses. The Regent, hoping to become the first in Bruce's favour, was not less urgent to ruin the man who so deservedly stood the highest in that Prince's esteem. He had therefore entered warmly into the project of Lady Strathearn. But when, during a secret conference between them, previous to her open charge of Wallace, she named Sir Thomas de Longueville as one of his foreign emissaries, Cummin observed, 'If you would have your accusation succeed, do not mention that knight at all. He is my friend. He is now ill near Perth, and must know nothing of this affair till it be over. Should he live, he will nobly thank you for your forbearance; should he die, I will repay you, as becomes your nearest kinsman.' All were thus united, in one determined effort, to hurl Wallace from his station in

the state.—But when they believed that done, they quarrelled amongst themselves, in deciding who was to fill the great military office, which his prowess had now rendered a post rather of honour than of danger.

In the midst of these feuds, Sir Simon Fraser abruptly appeared in the council-hall. His countenance proclaimed his tidings. Lennox and Loch-awe, (who had duly attended, in hopes of bringing over some of the more pliable chiefs to embrace the cause of justice,) listened, with something like exultation, to his suddenly disastrous information. When the English governor at Berwick learnt, the removal of Wallace from his command, and the consequent consternation of the Scottish troops; instead of surrendering at sunset as was expected, he sallied out at the head of the whole garrison, and attacking the Scots by surprise gave them a total defeat. Every outpost around the town was retaken by the Southrons; the army of Fraser was cut to pieces or put to flight; and himself now arrived in Stirling, smarting with many a wound, but more under his dishonour, to show to the Regent of Scotland, the evil of having superseded the only man whom the enemy feared. The council stood in silence, staring on each other: and, to add to their dismay, Fraser had hardly completed his narration, before a messenger from Teviotdale arrived, to inform the Regent, that King Edward was himself within a few miles of the Cheviots; and from the recovered position of Berwick, must have even now poured his thousands over those hills upon the plains beneath. While all in the citadel was indecision, tumult and alarm, Lennox hastened to Wallace's camp with the news.

Lord Ruthven, and the Perthshire chiefs, were already there. They had arrived early in the morning, but with unpromising tidings of Bruce. The state of his wound had induced a constant delirium.—But still Wallace clung to the hope, that his country was not doomed to perish; that its Prince's recovery was only protracted. In the midst of this anxiety, Lennox entered; and relating what

he had just heard, turned the whole current of his auditors' ideas. Wallace started from his seat. His hand mechanically caught up his sword, which lay upon the table. Lennox gazed at him with animated veneration: 'There is not a man in the citadel,' cried he, 'who does not appear at his wit's end, and incapable of facing this often-beaten foe. Will you, Wallace, again condescend to save a country, that has treated you so ungratefully?'—'I would die in its trenches!' cried the chief,—with a generous forgiveness of all his injuries.

CHAPTER XLVI

ARTHUR'S SEAT

For a day or two, the paralysed terrors of the people, and the tumults in the citadel, seemed portentous of immediate ruin. A large detachment from the royal army had entered Scotland, by the marine gate of Berwick; and, headed by De Warenne, was advancing rapidly towards Edinburgh. Not a soldier belonging to the Regent remained on the Carse; and the distant chiefs, to whom he sent for aid, refused it; alleging, that the discovery of Wallace's patriotism having been a delusion, had made them suspect all men; and, now locking themselves within their own castles, each true Scot would there securely view a struggle, in which they could feel no personal interest.

Seeing the danger of the realm, and hearing from the Lords Ruthven and Bothwell, that their troops would follow no other leader than Sir William Wallace; and hopeless of any prompt decision from amongst the confusion of the council, Badenoch yielded a stern assent to the only apparent means of saving his sinking country. He turned ashy pale, while his silence granted to Lord Loch-awe the necessity of imploring Sir William Wallace, to again stretch out his arm in their behalf. With this embassy,

the venerable chief had returned exultingly to Ballochgeich; and the so lately branded Wallace, branded as the intended betrayer of Scotland, was solicited, by his very accusers, to assume the trust of their sole defence.

'Such is the triumph of virtue!' whispered Edwin to his friend, as he vaulted on his horse. A luminous smile from Wallace, acknowledged that he felt the tribute: and, looking up to Heaven ere he placed his helmet on his head, he said, 'Thence comes my power! and the satisfaction it brings, whether attended by man's applause, or his blame, he cannot take from me. I now, perhaps for the last time, arm this head for Scotland. May the God in whom I trust, again crown it with victory; and for ever after bind the brows of our rightful sovereign with peace!'

While Wallace pursued his march, the Regent was quite at a stand; confounded at the turn which events had taken, and hardly knowing whether to make another essay to collect forces for the support of their former leader, or to follow the refractory counsels of his Lords, and await in inactivity the issue of the expected battle. He knew not how to act: but a letter from Lady Strathearn decided him.

Though partly triumphant in her charges, yet the accusations of Bothwell had disconcerted her; and though the restoration of Wallace to his undisputed authority in the state, seemed to her next to impossible, still she resolved to take another step, to confirm her influence over the discontented of her country, and, most likely, to ensure the vengeance she panted to bring upon her victim's head. To this end, on the very evening that she retreated in terror from the council-hall, she set forward to the borders; and, easily passing thence to the English camp (then pitched at Alnwick,) was soon admitted to the castle, where De Warenne lodged. She was too well taught in the school of vanity, not to have remarked the admiration with which that earl had regarded her, while he was a prisoner in Stirling; and, hoping that he might not be able to withstand the persuasion of her charms,

she opened her mission with no less art than effect. De Warenne was made to believe, that on the strength of a passion Wallace had conceived for her, and which she treated with disdain, he had repented of his former refusal of the crown of Scotland; and, misled by a hope that she would not repeat her rejection of his hand, could it present her a sceptre, he was now attempting to compass that dignity by the most complicated intrigues. She then related how, at her instigation, the Regent had deposed him from his military command; and she ended with saying, that impelled by loyalty to Edward (whom her better reason now recognised as the lawful sovereign of her country), she had come to exhort that monarch to renew his invasion of the kingdom. Intoxicated with her beauty, and enraptured by a manner which seemed to tell him that a softer sentiment than usual had made her select him as the ambassador to the King, De Warenne greedily drank in all her words; and ere he allowed this, to him, romantic conference to break up, he had thrown himself at her feet, and implored her, by every impassioned argument, to grant him the privilege of presenting her to Edward as his intended bride. De Warenne was in the meridian of life; and being fraught with a power at court beyond most of his peers, she determined to accept his hand, and wield its high influence to the destruction of Wallace; even should she be compelled, in the act, to precipitate her country in his fall. De Warenne drew from her a half-reluctant consent; and, while he poured forth the transports of a happy lover, he was not so much enamoured of the fine person of Lady Strathearn, as to be altogether insensible to the advantages which his alliance with her would give to Edward in his Scottish pretensions. And as it would consequently increase his own importance with that monarch, he lost no time in communicating the circumstance to him. Edward suspected something in this sudden attachment of the Countess, which, should it transpire, might cool the ardour of his officer for uniting

so useful an agent to his cause; therefore, having highly approved De Warenne's conduct in the affair, to hasten the nuptials, he proposed being present at their solemnisation that very evening. The solemn vows which Lady Strathearn then pledged at the altar to Warenne, were pronounced by her with no holy awe of the marriage contract; but rather as those alone by which she swore to complete her revenge on Wallace, and, by depriving him of life, prevent the climax to her misery, of seeing him (what she believed he intended to become) the husband of Helen Mar. The day after she became De Warenne's wife, she accompanied him by sea to Berwick; and from that place she despatched messengers to the Regent, and to other nobles, her kinsmen, fraught with promises, which Edward, in the event of success, had solemnly pledged himself to ratify. Her ambassador arrived at Stirling the day succeeding that in which Wallace and his troops had marched from Ballochgeich. The letters he brought were eagerly opened by Badenoch and his chieftains; and they found their contents to this effect. She announced to them her marriage with the Lord Warden, who was returned into Scotland, with every power for the final subjugation of the country; and therefore she besought the Regent, and his council, not to raise a hostile arm against him, if they would, not merely escape the indignation of a great king, but ensure his favour. She cast out hints to Badenoch, as if Edward meant to reward his acquiescence with the crown of Scotland; and with similar baits, proportioned to the views of all her other kinsmen, she smoothed their anger against that monarch's former insults, persuading them to at least remain inactive during the last struggle of their country.

Meanwhile Wallace, taking his course along the banks of the Forth, when the night drew near encamped his little army at the base of the craigs, east of Edinburgh Castle. His march having been long and rapid, the men were much fatigued, and hardly were laid upon their heather beds

before they fell asleep. Wallace had learned from his scouts, that the main body of the Southrons were approached within a few miles of Dalkeith. Thither he hoped to go next morning; and there, he trusted, strike the conclusive blow for Scotland, by the destruction of a division which he understood comprised the flower of the English army. With these expectations, he glady saw his troops lying in that repose which would rebrace their strength for the combat.

CHAPTER XLVII

DALKEITH

Wallace, next day, drew up his army in order for the new battle, near a convent of Cistertian monks, on the narrow plain of Dalkeith. The two rivers Eske, flowing on each side of the little phalanx, formed a temporary barrier between it and the pressing legions of De Warenne. The Earl's troops seemed countless; while the Southron lords who led them on, being elated by the representations which the Countess of Strathearn had given to them, of the disunited state of the Scottish army, and the consequent dismay which had seized their hitherto all-conquering commander, bore down upon the Scots with an impetuosity which threatened their universal destruction. Deceived by the blandishing falsehoods of his bride, De Warenne had entirely changed his former opinion of his brave opponent; and by her sophistries having brought his mind to adopt stratagems of intimidation, unworthy of his nobleness, (so contagious is baseness, in too fond a contact with the unprincipled!) he placed himself on an adjoining height, intending from that commanding post to dispense his orders, and behold his victory. 'Soldiers!' cried he, 'the rebel's hour is come.—The sentence of Heaven is gone forth against him. Charge resolutely, and he and his host are yours.'

The sky was obscured; an awful stillness reigned through the air; and the spirits of the mighty dead seemed leaning from their clouds, to witness this last struggle of their sons. Fate did indeed hover over the opposing armies. She descended on the head of Wallace, and dictated from amidst his waving plumes. She pointed his spear, she wielded his flaming sword, she charged with him in the dreadful shock of battle. De Warenne saw his foremost thousands fall. He heard the shout of the Scots, the cries of his men—and the plains of Stirling rose to his remembrance. He hastily ordered the knights around him, to bear his wife from the field; and descending the hill, to lead forward himself, was met, and almost overwhelmed, by his flying troops: horses without riders, men without shield or sword, but all in dismay, rushed past him. He called to them, he waved the royal standard, he urged, he reproached;—he rallied, and led them back again. The fight recommenced.— Long and bloody was the conflict. De Warenne fought for conquest, and to recover a lost reputation. Wallace contended for his country; and to show himself always worthy of her latest blessing, 'before he should go hence, and be no more seen!'

The issue declared for Scotland. But the ground was covered with the slain, and Wallace chased a wounded foe, with troops which dropped as they pursued. At sight of the melancholy state of his intrepid soldiers, he tried to check their ardour, but in vain. 'It is for Wallace that we conquer!' cried they, 'and, we die, or prove him the only captain, in this ungrateful country.'

Night compelled them to halt; and while they rested on their arms, Wallace was satisfied that he had destroyed the power of De Warenne. As he leaned on his sword, and stood with Edwin near the watch-fire over which that youthful hero kept a guard, he contemplated, with generous forbearance, the terrified Southrons, as they fled precipitately by the foot of the hill, towards the Tweed.

The splendour of this victory struck to the souls of the council at Stirling; but with no touch of remorse. Scotland being again rescued from the vengeance of her implacable foe, the disaffected Lords in the citadel, affected to spurn at her preservation; declaring to the Regent, that they would rather bear the yoke of the veriest tyrant in the world, than owe a moment of freedom to the man who (they pretended to believe) had conspired against their lives. And they had a weighty reason for this decision. Though De Warenne was beaten, his wife was a victor. She had made Edward triumphant, in the venal hearts of her kinsmen: gold, and her persuasions, with promises of future honours from the King of England, had sealed them entirely his. All but the Regent, were ready to commit everything into the hands of Edward. The rising favour of these other lords, with the court of England, induced him to recollect that he might rule as the unrivalled friend of Bruce, should that Prince live; or, in case of his death, he might have it in his own power to assume the Scottish throne untrammelled. These thoughts made him fluctuate; and his country found him as undetermined in treason, as unstable in fidelity.

Immediately on the victory at Dalkeith, Kirkpatrick (eager to be the first communicator of such welcome news to Lennox, who had planted himself as a watch at Stirling,) withdrew secretly from Wallace's camp; and, hoping to move the gratitude of the refractory Lords, entered, full of honest joy, into the midst of their council.

He proclaimed the success of his commander. His answer, was accusations and insult.

Next morning, instead of coming as usual directly to their acknowledged protector, the Lothian chieftains were seen at different parts of the camp, closely conversing in groups; and when any of Wallace's officers approached, they separated, or withdrew to a greater distance. This

strange conduct, Wallace attributed to its right source, and thought of Bruce with a sigh, when he contemplated the variable substance of these men's minds. However, he was so convinced that nothing but the proclamation of Bruce, and that prince's personal exertions, could preserve his country from falling again into the snare from which he had just snatched it, that he was preparing to set out for Perthshire with such persuasions, when Ker hastily entered his tent. He was followed by the Lord Soulis, Lord Buchan, and several other chiefs of equally hostile intentions. Soulis did not hesitate to declare his errand.

'We come, Sir William Wallace, by the command of the Regent, and the assembled abthanes of Scotland, to take these brave troops, which have performed such good service to their country, from the power of a man, who, we have every reason to believe, means to turn their arms against the liberties of the realm. Without a pardon from the states; without the signature of the Regent; in contempt of the court, which, having found you guilty of high treason, had in mercy delayed to pronounce sentence on your crime; you have presumed to place yourself at the head of the national troops, and to take to yourself the merit of a victory won by their prowess alone! Your designs are known; and the authority you have despised, is now roused to punish. You are to accompany us this day to Stirling. We have brought a guard of four thousand men to compel your obedience.

Before the indignant spirit of Wallace could utter the answer his wrongs dictated; Bothwell, who, at sight of the Regent's troops, had hastened to his general's tent, entered, followed by his chieftains.—'Were your guard forty thousand, instead of four,' cried he; 'they should not force our commander from us; they should not extinguish the glory of Scotland, beneath the traitorous devices of hell-engendered envy, and murderous cowardice!' Soulis turned on him with eyes of fire, and laid his hand on his

sword. 'Ay, cowardice!' reiterated Bothwell; 'the midnight ravisher, the slanderer of virtue, the betrayer of his country, knows in his heart, that he fears to draw aught but the assassin's steel. He dreads the sceptre of honour;—Wallace must fall, that vice and her votaries may reign in Scotland. A thousand brave Scots lie under these sods; and a thousand yet survive, who may share their graves; but they never will relinquish their invincible leader, into the hands of traitors!'

The clamours of the citadel of Stirling now resounded through the tent of Wallace. Invectives, accusations, threatenings, reproaches, and revilings, joined in one turbulent uproar. Again swords were drawn; and Wallace, in attempting to beat down the weapons of Soulis and Buchan aimed at Bothwell's heart, must have received the point of Soulis in his own body, had he not grasped the blade, and wrenching it out of the chief's hand, broke it into shivers; 'Such be the fate of every sword, which Scot draws against Scot!' cried he. 'Put up your weapons, my friends. —The arm of Wallace is not shrunk, that he could not defend himself, did he think that violence were necessary. Hear my determination, once, and for ever!' added he; 'I acknowledge no authority in Scotland, but the laws. The present Regent, and his abthanes outrage them in every ordinance; and I should indeed be a traitor to my country, did I submit to such men's behests. I shall not obey their summons to Stirling—neither will I permit a hostile arm to be raised in this camp, against their delegates, unless the violence begins with them.—This is my answer.'—Uttering these words, he motioned Bothwell to follow him, and left the tent.

Crossing a rude plank-bridge, which then lay over the Eske, he met Lord Ruthven, accompanied by Edwin, and Lord Sinclair. The latter came to inform Wallace, that ambassadors from Edward awaited his presence at Roslyn. 'They come, to offer peace to our distracted country,' cried Sinclair. 'Then,' answered Wallace, 'I shall not

delay going where I may hear the terms.' Horses were brought; and, during their short ride, to prevent the impassioned representations of the still raging Bothwell, Wallace communicated, to his not less indignant friends, the particulars of the scene he had left. 'These contentions must be terminated,' added he; 'and, with God's blessing, a few days, and they shall be so!'—'Heaven grant it!' returned Sinclair, thinking he referred to the proposed negotiation. 'If Edward's offers be at all reasonable, I would urge you to accept them; otherwise, invasion from without, and civil commotion within, will probably make a desert of poor Scotland.' Ruthven interrupted him: 'Despair not, my Lord! Whatever be the fate of this embassy, let us remember, that it is our steadiest friend who decides; and that his arm is still with us, to repel invasion,—to chastise treason!' Edwin's eyes turned with a direful expression upon Wallace, while he lowly murmured, 'Treason! hydra treason!' Wallace understood him, and answered; 'Grievous are the alternatives, my friends, which your love for me would persuade you even to welcome. But that which I shall choose, will, I trust, indeed lay the land at peace;—or point its hostilities to the only aim, against which a true Scot ought to direct his sword, at this crisis!'

Being arrived at the gate of Roslyn, Wallace, regardless of those ceremonials, which often delay the business they pretend to dignify, entered at once into the hall where the ambassadors sat. Baron Hilton was one, and Le de Spencer (father to the young and violent envoy of that name) was the other. At sight of the Scottish chief, they rose; and the good baron, believing he came on a propitious errand, smiling, said, 'Sir William Wallace, it is your private ear, I am commanded to seek.' While speaking, he looked on Sinclair, and the other lords. 'These chiefs, are as myself,' replied Wallace; 'but I will not impede your embassy, by crossing the wishes of your master in a trifle.' He then turned to his friends; 'Indulge

the monarch of England, in making me the first acquainted with that, which can only be a message to the whole nation.'

The chiefs withdrew; and Hilton, without further parley, opened his mission.—He said, that King Edward, more than ever impressed with the wondrous military talents of Sir William Wallace, and solicitous to make a friend of so heroic an enemy, had sent him an offer of grace, which, if he contemned, must be the last. He offered him a theatre, whereon he might display his peerless endowments, to the admiration of the world—the kingdom of Ireland, with its yet unreaped fields of glory, and all the ample riches of its abundant provinces, should be his! Edward only required, in return for this royal gift, that he should abandon the cause of Scotland; swear fealty to him for Ireland; and resign into his hands, one whom he had proscribed as the most ungrateful of traitors. In double acknowledgment for the latter sacrifice, Wallace need only send to England a list of those Scottish lords, against whom he bore resentment, and their fates should be ordered according to his dictates. Edward concluded his offers, by inviting him immediately to London, to be invested with his new sovereignty; and Hilton ended his address; by showing him the madness of abiding in a country, where almost every chief, secretly, or openly, carried a dagger against his life; and therefore he exhorted him, no longer to contend for a nation so unworthy of freedom, that it bore with impatience the only man who had the courage to maintain its independence by virtue alone.

Wallace replied calmly, and without hesitation: 'To this message, an honest man can make but one reply. As well might your sovereign exact of me, to dethrone the angels of heaven, as to require me to subscribe to his proposals!—They do but mock me; and aware of my rejection, they are thus delivered, to throw the whole blame of this cruelly persecuting war upon me. Edward knows,

that as a knight, a true Scot, and a man, I should dishonour myself, to accept even life, ay, or the lives of all my kindred, upon these terms.'

Baron Hilton turned sorrowfully away, and Le de Spencer rose: 'Sir William Wallace, my part of the embassy must be delivered to you in the assembly of your chieftains!' 'In the congregation of my camp,' returned he; and opening the door of the ante-room, in which his friends stood, he sent Edwin to summon his chiefs to the platform before the council-tent.

When Wallace approached his tent, he found, not only the captains of his own army, but the followers of Soulis, and the chieftains of Lothian. He looked on this range of his enemies, with a fearless eye, and passing through the crowd, took his station beside the ambassadors, on the platform of the tent. The venerable Hilton turned away with tears on his veteran cheeks, as the chief advanced; and Le de Spencer came forward, to speak. Wallace, with a dignified action, requested his leave for a few minutes, and then addressing the congregated warriors, unfolded to them the offer of Edward to him, and his reply. 'And now,' added he, 'the ambassador of England is at liberty to declare his master's alternative.'

Le de Spencer again advanced, but the acclamations with which the followers of Wallace acknowledged the nobleness of his answer, excited such an opposite clamour on the side of the Soulis party, that Le de Spencer was obliged to mount a war-carriage which stood near, and to vociferate long and loudly for silence, before he could be heard. But the first words which caught the ears of his audience, acted like a spell, and seemed to hold them in breathless attention.

'Since Sir William Wallace rejects the grace of his liege lord, Edward King of England, offered to him this once, and never to be again repeated; thus saith the King, in his clemency, to the earls, barons, knights, and commonalty of Scotland! To every one of them, chief and vassal,

excepting the aforesaid incorrigible rebel, he, the royal Edward, grants an amnesty of all their past treasons against his sacred person and rule; provided, that within twenty-four hours after they hear the words of this proclamation, they acknowledge their disloyalty, with repentance: and laying down their arms, swear eternal fealty to their only lawful ruler, Edward, the lord of the whole island, from sea to sea.'—Le de Spencer then proclaimed the King of England to be now on the borders, with an army of a hundred thousand men, ready to march with fire and sword into the heart of the kingdom, and put to the rack all of every sex, age, and condition, who should venture to dispute his rights.—'Yield,' added he, 'while you may yet not only grasp the mercy extended to you, but the rewards, and the honours, he is ready to bestow. Adhere to that unhappy man, and by to-morrow's sunset, your offended King will be on these hills, and then mercy shall be no more! Death is the doom of Sir William Wallace; and a similar fate to every Scot, who, after this hour, dares to give him food, shelter, or succour. He is the prisoner of King Edward; and thus, I demand him at your hands!'

Wallace spoke not, but with an unmoved countenance looked around upon the assembly. Edwin precipitated himself into his arms. Bothwell's full soul then forced utterance from his labouring breast; 'Tell your sovereign,' cried he, 'that he mistakes.—We are the conquerors, who ought to dictate terms of peace! Wallace is our invincible leader, our redeemer from slavery, the earthly hope in whom we trust; and it is not in the power of men, nor devils, to bribe us to betray our benefactor. Away to your king, and tell him that Andrew Murray, and every honest Scot, is ready to live or to die by the side of Sir William Wallace.'—'And by this good sword, I swear the same!' cried Ruthven.—'And so do I!' rejoined Scrymgeour, 'or may the standard of Scotland be my winding-sheet!'—'Or, may the Clyde swallow us up, quick!'

exclaimed Lockhart of Lee, shaking his mailed hand at the ambassadors.

But not another chief spoke for Wallace. Even Sinclair was intimidated; and like others who wished him well, feared to utter his sentiments. But most, oh! shame to Scotland, and to man, cast up their bonnets, and cried aloud—'Long live King Edward, the only legitimate lord of Scotland!'—At this outcry, which was echoed, even by some in whom he had confided; while it pealed around him like a burst of thunder, Wallace threw out his arms, as if he would yet protect Scotland from herself:—'O! desolate people,' exclaimed he, in a voice of piercing woe, 'too credulous of fair speeches, and not aware of the calamities which are coming upon you! Call to remembrance the miseries you have suffered, and start, before it be too late, from this last snare of your oppressor!—Have I yet to tell ye, that his embrace is death? O! look yet to Heaven and ye shall find a rescue!' Bruce seemed to rise at that moment, in pale but gallant apparition before his soul.[1]

'Seize that rebellious man,' cried Soulis to his marshals, 'In the name of the King of England, I command you.'—'And in the name of the King of kings, I denounce death on him who attempts it!' exclaimed Bothwell, throwing himself between Wallace and the men; 'put forth a hostile hand towards him, and this bugle shall call a thousand resolute swords to lay this platform in blood!'

Soulis, followed by his knights, pressed forward to execute his treason himself. Scrymgeour, Ruthven, Lockhart, and Ker rushed before their friend. Edwin, starting forward, drew his sword, and the clash of steel was heard. Bothwell and Soulis grappled together; the falchion of Ruthven gleamed amidst a hundred swords; and blood flowed around. The voice, the arm of Wallace, in vain sought to enforce peace; he was not heard, he was not felt, in the dreadful warfare; Ker fell with a gasp at his

[1] This speech is almost verbatim from one of our old historians.—(1809.)

feet, and breathed no more. At such a sight, the soul-struck Wallace wrung his hands, and exclaimed in bitter anguish, 'Oh, my country! was it for these horrors, that my Marion died? that I became a homeless wretch, and passed my days and nights in fields of carnage? Venerable Mar, dear and valiant Graham! is this the consummation, for which you fell?'—At that moment, Bothwell, having disabled Soulis, would have blown his bugle, to call up his men to a general conflict, but Wallace snatched the horn from his hand; and springing upon the very war-carriage, from which Le de Spencer, had proclaimed Edward's embassy, he drew forth his sword, and stretching the mighty arm that held it, over the throng—with more than mortal energy he exclaimed, 'Peace! men of Scotland; and for the last time, hear the voice of William Wallace.' A dead silence immediately ensued, and he proceeded, 'If you have aught of nobleness within ye; if a delusion, more fell than witchcraft, have not blinded your senses; look beyond this field of horror, and behold your country free. Edward, in these apparent demands, sues for peace. Did we not drive his armies into the sea?—And were we resolved, he never could cross our borders more. What is it then you do, when you again put your necks under his yoke? Did he not seek to bribe me, to betray you?—and yet, when I refuse to purchase life, and the world's rewards, by such baseness; you—you forget that you are free-born Scots, that you are the victors, and he the vanquished; and you give, not sell, your birth-right to the demands of a tyrant!—You yield yourselves to his extortions, his oppressions, his revenge!—think not he will spare the people he would have sold, to purchase his bitterest enemy; or allow them to live unmanacled, who possess the power of resistance. On the day in which you are in his hands, you will feel that you have exchanged honour for disgrace, liberty for bondage, life for death!—Me, you abhor; and may God, in your extremest hour, forget that injustice, and pardon the faithful blood you

Wallace Renounces His Leadership

have shed this day!—I draw this sword for you no more. But there yet lives a prince, a descendant of the royal heroes of Scotland, whom Providence may conduct to be your preserver. Reject the proposals of Edward; dare to defend the freedom you now possess; and that prince will soon appear, to crown your patriotism with glory and happiness!'

'We acknowledge no prince, but King Edward of England!' cried Buchan.—'His countenance is our glory, his presence our happiness!' The exclamation was reiterated by a most disgraceful majority on the ground. Wallace was transfixed.—'Then,' cried Le de Spencer, in the first pause of the tumult, 'to every man, woman, and child, throughout the realm of Scotland, excepting Sir William Wallace, I proclaim, in the name of King Edward, pardon and peace.'

At these words, several hundred Scottish chieftains dropped on their knees before Le de Spencer, and murmured their vows of fealty. Indignant, grieved, Wallace took his helmet from his head, and throwing his sword into the hand of Bothwell, 'That weapon,' cried he, 'which I wrested from this very King Edward, and with which I twice drove him from our borders, I give to you. In your hands it may again serve Scotland. I relinquish a soldier's name, on the spot where I humbled England three times in one day; where I now see my victorious country deliver herself, bound, into the grasp of the vanquished! I go, without sword or buckler, from this dishonoured field; and what Scot, my public or private enemy, will dare to strike the unguarded head of William Wallace?'——As he spoke, he threw his shield and helmet to the ground; and leaping from the war-carriage, took his course, with a fearless and dignified step, through the parting ranks of his enemies; who, awe-struck, or kept in check, by suspicion that others might not second the attack they would have made on him, durst not lift an arm, or breathe a word as he passed.

CHAPTER XLVIII

BANKS OF THE ESKE

A VAGUE suspicion of the Regent, and his thanes; and yet a panic-struck pusillanimity, which shrunk from supporting that Wallace whom those thanes chose to abandon, carried the spirit of slavery, from the platform before the council-tent, to the chieftains who thronged the ranks of Ruthven; and even to the perversion of some few who had followed the golden-haired standard of Bothwell. The brave troops of Lanark (which the desperate battle of Dalkeith, had reduced to not more than sixty men,) alone remained unmoved:—so catching is the quailing spirit of doubt, abjectness, and fearful submission.

In the moment when the indignant Ruthven, saw his Perthshire legions rolling off towards the trumpet of Le de Spencer, Scrymgeour placed himself at the head of the men of Lanark. Unfurling the banner of Scotland, he marched, with a steady step towards the tent of Bothwell; whither he did not doubt that Wallace had retired. He found him assuaging the impassioned grief of Edwin; and striving to moderate the vehement wrath of the faithful Murray. 'Pour not out the energy of your soul, upon these worthless men!' said he; 'leave them to the fates they seek; the fates they have incurred, by the innocent blood shed this day! The few brave hearts, who yet remain loyal to their country, are insufficient to stem, at this spot, the torrent of corruption. Retire beyond the Forth, my friend. Rally all true Scots around Huntingtower. Let the royal inmate proclaim himself; and, at the foot of the Grampians, lock the gates of the Highlands upon our enemies. From those bulwarks, he will issue in strength, and Scotland may again be free!'

Ruthven joined in determined opinion with Bothwell, that if ever a civil war could be sanctified, this was the time; and in spite of all that Wallace could urge against the

madness of contending for his supremacy over a nation which would not yield him obedience, still they remained firm in their resolution. Bruce, they hardly dared hope could recover; and to relinquish the guiding hand of their best approved leader, at this crisis, was a sacrifice, they said, no earthly power should compel them to make. 'So far from it,' cried Lord Bothwell, dropping on his knees, and grasping the cross hilt of his sword in both hands, 'I swear by the blood of the crucified Lord of this ungrateful world, that should Bruce die, I will obey no other King of Scotland than William Wallace!' Wallace turned ashy pale, as he listened to this vow. At this moment Scrymgeour entered, followed by the Lanark veterans; and all kneeling down, repeated the oath of Bothwell; then starting up, called on the outraged chief, by the unburied corse of his murdered Ker, to lead them forth, and avenge them of his enemies.

Bothwell lingered a moment at the tent door, and looking back; 'Let your first plan be, that to-morrow, you lead us to Lord Soulis's quarters, to teach the traitor what it is to be a Scot and a man!'—'My plans shall be deserving of my brave colleagues,' replied Wallace; 'and whether they be executed on this, or the other side of the Forth, you shall find, my long-tried Bothwell, that Scotland's peace, and the honour of her best sons, are the dearest considerations of your friend.'

When the door closed, and Wallace was left alone, he stood for awhile in the midst of the tent, listening to the departing steps of his friends. When the last sound, died on his ear; 'I shall hear them no more!' cried he; and throwing himself into a seat, he remained for an hour in a trance of grievous thoughts. Melancholy remembrances, and prospects dire for Scotland, pressed upon his surcharged heart. 'It is to God alone, I must confide my country!' cried he; 'His mercy will pity its madness, and forgive its deep transgressions. My duty is, to remove the object of ruin, far from the power of any longer exciting

jealousy or awakening zeal.' With these words, he took a pen in his hand to write to Bruce.

He briefly narrated the events which compelled him, if he would avoid the grief of having occasioned a civil war, to quit his country for ever. The general hostility of the nobles; the unresisting acquiescence of the people, in measures which menaced his life, and sacrificed the freedom for which he had so long fought, convinced him, he said, that his warlike commission was now closed. He was summoned by Heaven, to exchange the field for the cloister: and to the monastery at Chartres, he was now hastening to dedicate the remainder of his days to the peace of a future world. He then exhorted Bruce, to confide in the Lords Ruthven and Bothwell, as his soul would commune with his spirit, for that he would find them true unto death. He counselled him, as the leading measure to circumvent the treason of Scotland's enemies, to go immediately to Kilchurn Castle, where he knew resources would be; for Loch-awe, who retired thither on the last approach of De Warenne, meaning to call out his vassals for that emergency, needed it not then; for the battle of Dalkeith was fought and gained, before they could leave their heights; and the victor did not want them afterwards. To use those brave and simple-hearted men, for his establishment on the throne of his kingdom, Wallace advised Bruce. And so, amidst the natural fortresses of the Highlands, he might recover his health, collect his friends, and openly proclaim himself. 'Then,' added he, 'when Scotland is your own, let its bulwarks, be its mountains, and its people's arms. Dismantle, and raze to the ground the castles of those base chiefs, who have only embattled them, to betray and enslave their country.' Though intent on these political suggestions, he ceased not to remember his own brave engines of war; and he earnestly conjured his Prince, that he would wear the valiant Kirkpatrick as a buckler on his heart; that he would place Scrymgeour, with his Lanark veterans, and the faithful Grimsby, next

him as his body guard; and that he would love, and cherish the brave and tender Edwin, for his sake. 'When my Prince and friend receives this,' added he, 'Wallace shall have bidden an eternal farewell to Scotland: but his heart will be amidst its hills.

'Should the endearing Helen—my heart's sister—be near your couch, when you read this, tell her, that Wallace, in idea, presses her virgin cheek with a brother's farewell; and from his inmost soul he blesses her.'

Messages of respectful adieus, he sent to Isabella, Lady Ruthven, and the sage of Ercildown: and then kneeling down, in that posture, he wrote his last invocations, for the prosperity and happiness of Bruce.

This letter finished, with a more tranquil mind he addressed Lord Ruthven; detailing to him his reasons for leaving such faithful friends so clandestinely: and after mentioning his purpose of proceeding to France, he ended with those expressions of gratitude which the worthy chief so well deserved; and exhorting him to transfer his public zeal for him, to the magnanimous and royal Bruce; closed the letter, with begging him, for the sake of his friend, his King, and his country, to return immediately with all his followers to Hunting-tower, and there to rally round their prince. His letter to Scrymgeour, spoke nearly the same language. But when he began to write to Bothwell; to bid him that farewell, which his heart foreboded would be for ever in this world; to part from this, his steady companion in arms, his dauntless champion! he lost some of his composure; and his hand-writing testified the emotion of his mind. How then was he shaken, when he addressed the young and devoted Edwin, the brother of his soul! He dropped the pen from his hand. At that moment, he felt all he was going to relinquish, and he exclaimed, 'Oh! Scotland! my ungrateful country; what is it you do? Is it thus that you repay your most faithful servants? Is it not enough that the wife of my bosom, the companion of my youth, should be torn from

me by your enemies; but your hand must wrest from my bereaved heart, its every other solace? You snatch from me my friends; you would deprive me of my life. To preserve you from that crime I embitter the cup of death; I go far from the tombs of my fathers; from the grave of my Marion, where I had fondly hoped to rest!'

In a paroxysm, he rushed from the tent: and reckless whither he went, struck into the depths of Roslyn woods. With the steps of the wind, he pierced their remotest thickets. He reached their boundary; it was traversed by a rapid stream; but that did not stop his course; he sprang over it; and, ascending its moon-lit bank, was startled by the sound of his name. Grimsby, attended by a youth, stood before him. The veteran expressed amazement at meeting his master alone at this hour, unhelmeted, and unarmed, and in so dangerous a direction. 'The road,' said he, 'between this and Stirling, is beset with your enemies.' Instead of noticing this information, Wallace inquired what news he brought from Hunting-tower. 'The worst,' said he. 'By this time the royal Bruce is no more!' Wallace gasped convulsively, and fell against a tree. Grimsby paused. In a few minutes the heart-struck chief was able to speak: 'Listen not to my groans for unhappy Scotland!' cried he; 'show me all that is in this last phial of wrath.'

Grimsby informed him, that Bruce being so far recovered as to have left his sick chamber for the family apartment, while he was sitting with the ladies a letter was brought to Lady Helen. She opened it, read a few lines, and fell senseless into the arms of her sister. Bruce snatched up the packet; but not a word did he speak, till he had perused it to the end. It was from the Countess Strathearn, written in the triumph of revenge, cruelly exulting in, what she termed, the demonstration of Wallace's guilt: congratulating herself on having been the primary means of discovering it, and boasting that his once adoring Scotland now held him in such detestation as to have

doomed him to die. It was this denunciation which had struck to the soul of Helen; and while the anxious Lady Ruthven removed her inanimate form into another room, Bruce read the barbarous triumphs of this disappointed woman. 'No power on earth can save him now,' continued she; 'your doating heart must yield him, Helen, to another rest than your bridal chamber. His iron breast has met with others as adamantine as his own. A hypocrite! he feels not pity, he knows no beat of human sympathies; and, like a rock he falls, unpitied, undeplored:—undeplored by all but you, lost, self-deluded girl! My noble lord, the princely De Warenne, informs me, that William Wallace would be burnt as a double traitor, in England! and a price is now set upon his head in Scotland! hence, there is safety for him no more. Those his base-born heart has outraged, shall be avenged:—and his cries for mercy! who will answer? No voice on earth! None will dare support the man, whom friends, and enemies, abandon to destruction!'

'Yes,' cried Bruce, starting from his seat, 'I will support him, thou damned traitress! Bruce will declare himself! —Bruce will throw himself before his friend, and in his breast receive every arrow meant for that godlike heart! Yes,' cried he, glancing on the terrified looks of Isabella, who believed that his delirium was returned, 'I would snatch him in these arms, from their murderous flames, did all the fiends of hell guard their infernal fire!' Not a word more did he utter, but darting from the apartment, was soon seen before the barbican-gate, armed from head to foot. Grimsby stood there, to whom he called to bring him a horse, 'For that the *Light of Scotland* was in danger.' Grimsby, who understood by that term, his beloved master was in peril, instantly obeyed; and Bruce, as instantly mounting, struck his rowels into his horse, and was out of sight ere Grimsby could reach his stirrup to follow.

But that faithful soldier speeded after him like the wind, and came in view of Bruce just as he was leaping a

chasm in the mountain path. The horse struck his heel against a loose stone, and, it giving way, he fell headlong into the deep ravine. At the moment of his disappearance, Grimsby rushed towards the spot, and saw the animal struggling in the agonies of death at the bottom. Bruce lay insensible, amongst some bushes which grew nearer the top. With difficulty the honest Englishman got him dragged to the surface of the hill; and finding all attempts to recover him, ineffectual, he laid him on his own beast, and so carried him slowly back to the castle. The assiduities of the sage of Ercildown, restored him to life, but not to recollection. 'The fever returned on him, with a delirium, so hopeless of recovery,' continued Grimsby, 'that the Lady Helen, who again seems like an inspired angel amongst us, has sent me, with this youth, to implore you to come to Hunting-tower; and there embattle yourself against your own, and your Prince's enemies.'

'Send me,' cried Walter Hay, grasping Wallace's hand, 'send me back to Lady Helen, and let me tell her that our benefactor, the best guardian of our country, will not abandon us! Should you depart, Scotland's genius will go with you! again she must sink, again she will be in ruins. De Valence will regain possession of my dear Lady, and you will not be near to save her.'

'Grimsby, Walter, my friends!' cried Wallace in an agitated voice; 'I do not abandon Scotland: she drives me from her. Would she have allowed me, I would have borne her in my arms, until my latest gasp; but it must not be so. I resign her into the Almighty hands, to which I commit myself: they will also preserve the Lady Helen from violence. I cannot forego my trust, for the Bruce also! If he live, he will protect her for my sake; and should he die, Bothwell and Ruthven, will cherish her for their own.'—'But you will return with us to Hunting-tower,' cried Grimsby. 'Disguised in these peasant's garments, which we have brought for the purpose, you may pass

through the legions of the Regent, with perfect security.' —'Let me implore you, if not for your own sake, for ours!—Pity our desolation, and save yourself for them who can know no safety when you are gone!' Walter clung to his arm, while uttering this supplication. Wallace looked tenderly upon him:—'I would save myself; and I will, please God,' said he; 'but by no means unworthy of myself. I go, but not under any disguise. Openly have I defended Scotland, and openly will I pass through her lands. The chalice of Heaven, consecrated me the champion of my country, and no Scot dare lift a hostile hand against this anointed head.'

Grimsby and Walter, struck by the holy solemnity of his manner, fell on their knees before him. Wallace raised his hands: 'Bless, Oh, Father of Light!' cried he; 'bless this unhappy land, when Wallace is no more; and let his memory be lost in the virtues and prosperity of Robert Bruce!'

CHAPTER XLIX

LUMLOCH

Wallace, having turned abruptly away from his lamenting servants, struck into the deep defiles of the Pentland Hills. They pointed to different tracks. Aware that the determined affection of some of his friends, might urge them to dare the perils attendant on his fellowship, he hesitated a moment which path to take. Certainly not towards Hunting-tower, to bring immediate destruction on its royal inhabitant. Nor to any chieftain of the Highlands, to give rise to a spirit of civil warfare. Neither would he pursue the eastern track; for in that direction, as pointing for France, his friends would most likely seek him.—He therefore turned his steps towards the ports of Ayr. The road was circuitous; but it would soon enough take him from the land of his fathers—from the country he must never see again!

As morning dispelled the shades of night, it discovered still more dreary glooms. A heavy mist hung over the hills, and rolled before him along the valley. Still he pursued his way, although, as day advanced, the vapours collected into thicker blackness, and floating down the heights, at last burst in a deluge of rain.

Hills, rivers, and vales, were measured by his solitary steps, till entering on the heights of Clydesdale, the broad river of his native glen spread its endeared waters before him. Not a wave passed along, that had not kissed the feet of some scene consecrated to his memory. Over the western hills, lay the lands of his forefathers. There he had first drawn his breath; there he imbibed from the lips of his revered grandfather, now no more, those lessons of virtue by which he had lived, and for which he was now ready to die. Far to the left, stretched the wide domains of Lammington: there his youthful heart first knew the pulse of love; there all nature smiled upon him, for Marion was near, and hope hailed him from every sun-lit mountain's brow. Onward, in the depths of the cliffs, lay Ellerslie, the home of his heart, where he had tasted the joys of Paradise; but all there, like that once blessed place, now lay in one wide ruin.

A few steps forward, and he stood on a mound of mouldering fragments heaped over the pavement of what had been the hall. 'My wife's blood marks the stones beneath!' cried he. He flung himself on the ruins, and a groan burst from his heart. It echoed mournfully from the opposite rock.—He started and gazed around. 'Solitude!' cried he, with a faint smile; 'nought is here, but Wallace and his sorrow.—Marion! I call, and even thou dost not answer me; thou, who didst ever fly at the sound of my voice! Look on me, love,' exclaimed he, stretching his arms towards the sky; 'look on me; and, for once, till ever, cheer thy lonely, heart-stricken Wallace!' Tears choked his further utterance; and once more laying his head upon the stones, he wept in silence, till exhausted nature found repose in sleep.

The sun was gilding the grey summits of the ruined tower, under whose shadow he lay, when Wallace slowly opened his eyes: looking around him, he smote his breast, and with a heavy groan sunk back upon the stones. In the silence which succeeded this burst of memory, he thought he heard a rustling near him, and a half-suppressed sigh. He listened breathless. The sigh was repeated. He gently raised himself on his hand, and, with an expectation he dared hardly whisper to himself, turned towards the spot whence the sound proceeded. The branches of a rose-tree that had been planted by his Marion, shook, and scattered the leaves of its ungathered flowers upon the brambles which grew beneath. Wallace rose in agitation. The skirts of a human figure appeared, retreating behind the ruins. He advanced towards it, and beheld Edwin Ruthven. The moment their eyes met, Edwin precipitated himself at his feet, and clinging to him, exclaimed, 'Pardon me this pursuit! But we meet, to part no more!' Wallace raised him, and strained him to his breast in silence. Edwin, in hardly articulate accents, continued; 'Some kind power checked your hand, when writing to your Edwin. You could not command him not to follow you! you left the letter unfinished; and thus I come to bless you for not condemning me to die of a broken heart!'—'I did not write farewell to thee,' cried Wallace, looking mournfully on him; 'but I meant it: for, I must part from all I love in Scotland. It is my doom. This country needs me not; and I have need of heaven. I go into its outcourts at Chartres. Follow me there, dear boy, when thou hast accomplished thy noble career on earth; and then our grey hairs shall mingle together over the altar of the God of Peace; but now, receive the farewell of thy friend. Return to Bruce, and be to him the dearest representative of William Wallace.' 'Never!' cried Edwin: 'thou alone art my prince, my friend, my brother, my all in this world!—My parents, dear as they are, would have buried my youth in a cloister; but your name called me to

honour: and to you, in life or in death, I dedicate my being.'—'Then,' returned Wallace, 'that honour summons you to the side of the dying Bruce. He is now in the midst of his foes.'—'And where art thou?' interruped Edwin: 'who drove thee hence, but enemies? who line these roads, but wretches sent to betray their benefactor? No, my friend, thy fate shall be my fate; thy woe my woe! We live! or we die together: the field, the cloister, or the tomb; all shall be welcomed by Edwin Ruthven, if they separate him not from thee!' Seeing that Wallace was going to speak, and fearful that it was to repeat his commands to be left alone, he suddenly exclaimed with vehemence, 'Father of men and angels! grant me Thy favour, only as I am true to the vow I have sworn, never more to leave the side of Sir William Wallace.'

To urge the dangers to which such a resolution would expose this too faithful friend, Wallace knew would be in vain: he read an invincible determination in the eye and gesture of Edwin; and, therefore yielding to the demands of friendship, he threw himself on his neck. 'For thy sake, Edwin, I will yet endure awhile mankind at large! Thy bloom of honour shall not be cropped by my hand. We will go together to France; and while I seek a probationary quiet in some of its remote cities, thou mayest bear the standard of Scotland, in the land of our ally, against the proud enemies of Bruce.'—'Make of me what you will,' returned Edwin, 'only do not divide me from yourself!'

Wallace explained to his friend his design of crossing the hills, to Ayrshire; in some port of which, he did not doubt finding some vessel bound for France. Edwin overturned this plan, by telling him, that in the moment the abthanes repledged their secret faith to England, they sent orders into Ayrshire, to watch the movements of Wallace's relations; and to prevent their either hearing of, or marching to the assistance of their wronged kinsman. And besides this, no sooner was it discovered by the

insurgent Lords at Roslyn, that he had disappeared from the camp, than supposing he meant to appeal to Philip, they despatched expresses all along the western and eastern coasts, from the friths of Forth and Clyde, to those of Solway and Berwick-upon-Tweed, to intercept him. On hearing this, and that all avenues from the southern parts of his country were closed upon him, Wallace determined to try the north. Some bay in the Western Highlands might open its yet not ungrateful arms, to set its benefactor free! 'If not by a ship,' continued Edwin, 'a fisher's boat will launch us from a country no longer worthy of you!'

Their course was then taken along the Cartlane craigs; at a distance from villages and mountain cots, which, leaning from their verdant heights, seemed to invite the traveller to refreshment and repose.

When they arrived within sight of the high towers of Bothwell Castle, Wallace stopped. 'We must not go thither,' said Edwin, replying to the sentiment, which spoke from the eyes of his friend; 'the servants of my cousin Andrew, may not be as faithful as their lord!'—'I will not try them,' returned Wallace, with a resigned smile; 'my presence in Bothwell chapel, shall not pluck danger on the head of my dauntless Murray. She wakes in heaven for me, whose body sleeps there; and knowing where to find the jewel, my friend! shall I linger over the vacated casket?'

While he yet spoke, a chieftain on horseback suddenly emerged from the trees, which led to the castle, and drew to their side. Edwin was wrapped in his plaid; and cautiously concealing his face that no chance of his recognition, might betray his companion, he walked briskly on, without once looking at the stranger. But Wallace, being without any shade over the noble contour of a form, which for majesty and grace was unequalled in Scotland, could not be mistaken. He, too, moved swiftly forward. The horseman spurred after him. Perceiving himself

pursued, and therefore known, and aware that he must be overtaken, he suddenly stopped. Edwin drew his sword, and would have given it into the hand of his friend; but Wallace, putting it back, rapidly answered, 'Leave my defence to this unweaponed arm. I would not use steel against my countrymen; but none shall take me, while I have a sinew to resist.'

The chieftain now checked his horse in front of Wallace, and respectfully raising his visor, discovered Sir John Monteith. At sight of him, Edwin dropped the point of his yet uplifted sword; and Wallace, stepping back, 'Monteith,' said he, 'I am sorry for this rencontre. If you would be safe from the destiny which pursues me, you must retire immediately, and forget that we have met.'—'Never,' cried Monteith; 'I know the ingratitude of an envious country drives the bravest of her champions from our borders; but I also know, what belongs to myself! To serve you at all hazards! And by conjuring you to become my guest, in my castle on the frith of Clyde, I would demonstrate my grateful sense of the dangers you once incurred for me; and I therefore thank fortune for this rencontre.'

In vain Wallace expressed his determination, not to bring peril on any of his countrymen, by sojourning under any roof, till he were far from Scotland. In vain he urged to Monteith, the outlawry which would await him, should the infuriate abthanes discover that he had given shelter to the man whom they had chosen to suppose a traitor, and denounce as one. Monteith, after equally unsuccessful persuasions on his side, at last said, that he knew a vessel was now lying at Newark near his castle, in which Wallace might immediately embark; and he implored him, by past friendship, to allow him to be his guide to its anchorage. To enforce this supplication, he threw himself off his horse, and, with protestations of a fidelity that trampled on all dangers, entreated, even with sobs, not to be refused the last comfort he should ever know

in his now degraded country. 'Once, I saw Scotland's steady champion, the brave Douglas, rifled from her shores! Do not then doom me to a second grief, bitterer than the first; do not you yourself, drive me from the side of her last hero!—Ah! let me behold you, companion of my school-days, friend, leader, benefactor! till the sea wrests you for ever from my eyes!'—Exhausted, and affected, Wallace gave his hand to Monteith; the tear of gratitude stood in his eye. He looked affectionately from Monteith to Edwin, from Edwin to Monteith; 'Wallace shall yet live in the memory of the trusty of this land! you, my friends, prove it. I go richly forth, for the hearts of good men are my companions.'

Night overtook the travellers, near the little village of Lumloch, about two hours' journey from Glasgow. Here, a storm coming on, Monteith advised his friends to take shelter, and rest. 'As you object to implicate others,' said he, 'you may sleep secure in an old barn, which at present has no ostensible owner. I remarked it, while passing this way from Newark. But I rather wish you would forget this too chary regard for others, and lodge with me in the neighbouring cottage.' Wallace was insensible to the pelting of the elements; his unsubdued spirit, neither wanted rest for mind nor body; but the broken voice, and lingering step of the young Edwin, who had severely sprained his foot in the dark, penetrated his heart; and notwithstanding that the resolute boy, suddenly rallying himself, declared he was neither weary nor in pain, Wallace, seeing he was both, yielded a sad consent to be conducted from the storm. 'But not,' said he, 'to the house. We will go into the barn; and there, on the dry earth, my Edwin, we may gratefully repose.'

Monteith did not oppose him further, and pushing open the door, Wallace and Edwin entered. Their conductor soon after followed, with a light from the cottage; and pulling down some heaped straw, strewed it on the ground for a bed. 'Here I shall sleep like a prince!' cried Edwin,

throwing himself along the scattered truss. 'But not,' returned Monteith,' till I have disengaged you from your wet garments; and preserved your arms, and brigandine, from the rust of this night.' Edwin, sunk in weariness, said little in opposition; and having suffered Monteith to take away his sword, and to unbrace his plated vest, dropped at once on the straw in a profound sleep.

Wallace, that he might not disturb him by debate, yielded to the request of Monteith; and having resigned his armour also, waved him a good night. Monteith nodded the same, and closed the door upon his victims.

Well known to the generals of King Edward, as one who estimated his honour as a mere counter of traffick, Sir John Monteith was considered by them all as a hireling fit for any purpose. To incline Edward to the proffer of an earldom, De Valence instanced Monteith's having volunteered, while he commanded with Sir Eustace Maxwell on the borders, to betray the forces under him to the English general. The treachery was accepted; and for its execution he received a casket of uncounted gold. Some other proofs of his devotion to England, were mentioned by De Valence. 'You mean his devotion to money!' replied the King; 'and if that will make him ours at this crisis, give him overflowing coffers, but no earldom!—Though I must have the head of Wallace, I would not have one of my peers show a title written in his blood. Ill deeds must sometimes be done; but we do not emblazon their perpetrators!'

De Valence having received his credentials, sent Haliburton, (a Scottish prisoner, who bought his liberty too dear by such an embassage,) to impart to Sir John Monteith the King of England's proposal. Monteith was then castellan of Newark; where he had immured himself for many months, under a pretence of the re-opening of old wounds; but the fact was, his treasons were connected with so many accomplices, that he feared some disgraceful disclosure, and therefore kept out of the way of exciting

public attention. Avarice was his master passion; and the sudden idea that there might be treasure in the iron box, which, unwitting of such a thought at the time, he had consigned to Wallace, first bound him a sordid slave. His murmurs for having allowed the box to leave his possession, gave the alarm which caused the disasters at Ellerslie, and his own immediate arrest.

The hour of midnight passed, and yet he could not summon courage to lead his men to their nefarious attack. Twice they urged him, before he arose from his affected sleep: for sleep he could not: guilt had 'murdered sleep!' and he lay awake, restless, and longing for the dawn:—and yet, ere that dawn, the deed must be accomplished! A cock crew from a neighbouring farm. 'That is the sign of morning, and we have yet done nothing,' exclaimed a surly ruffian, who leaned on his battle-axe, in an opposite corner of the apartment. 'No, it is the signal of our enemy's captivity!' cried Monteith.— 'Follow me; but gently. If ye speak a word; or a single target rattle, before ye all fall upon him, we are lost!—It is a being of supernatural might, and not a mere man, whom you go to encounter.—He that first disables him, shall have a double reward.'

'Depend upon us,' returned the sturdiest ruffian: and stealing cautiously out of the cottage, the party advanced with noiseless steps towards the barn. Monteith paused at the door; making a sign to his men to halt, while he listened.—He put his ear to a crevice; not a murmur was within. He gently raised the latch, and setting the door wide open, with his finger on his lip, beckoned his followers. Without venturing to draw a breath, they approached the threshold. The meridian moon shone full into the hovel, and shed a broad light upon their victims. The innocent face of Edwin, rested on the bosom of his friend; and the arm of Wallace lay on the spread straw with which he had covered the tender body of his companion. So fair a picture of mortal friendship, was never before beheld.

But the hearts were blind, which looked on it; and Monteith gave the signal. He retreated out of the door, while his men threw themselves forward, to bind Wallace where he lay: but the first man, in his eagerness, striking his head against a joist in the roof, uttered a fierce oath. The noise roused Wallace, whose wakeful senses had rather slumbered than slept, and, opening his eyes, he sprang on his feet. A moment told him enemies were around.—Seeing him rise, they rushed on him with imprecations. His eyes blazed like two terrible meteors; and, with a sudden motion of his arm, he seemed to hold the men at a distance, while his god-like figure stood, a tower, in collected might. Awe-struck, they paused; but it was only for an instant. The sight of Edwin, now starting from his sleep; his aghast countenance, while he felt for his weapons; his cry, when he recollected they were gone; inspired the assassins with fresh courage Battle-axes, swords, and rattling chains, now flashed before the eyes of Wallace. The pointed steel, in many places entered his body; while, with part of a broken bench, which chanced to lie near him, he defended himself and Edwin from this merciless host. Edwin, seeing nought but the death of his friend before his sight, regardless of himself, made a spring from his side, and snatched a dagger from the belt of one of the murderers. The ruffian instantly caught the intrepid boy by the throat; and in that horrible clutch, would certainly have deprived him of life, had not the lion grasp of Wallace seized the man in his arms; and with a pressure that made his mouth and nostrils burst with blood, compelled him to forego his hold. Edwin released, Wallace dropped his assailant, who, staggering a few paces, fell senseless to the ground, and instantly expired.

The conflict now became doubly desperate.—Edwin's dagger, twice defended the breast of his friend. Two of the assassins he stabbed to the heart.—'Murder that urchin!' cried Monteith; who, seeing from without, the carnage of his men, feared that Wallace might yet make his

escape. 'Hah!' cried Wallace, at the sound of Monteith's voice, giving such an order;—'then we are betrayed—but not by Heaven! Strike, one of you, that angel youth,' cried he, 'and you will incur damnation!'—He spoke to the winds. They poured towards Edwin. Wallace, with a giant's strength, dispersed them as they advanced: the beam of wood fell on the heads, the breasts of his assailants. Himself, bleeding at every pore, felt not a smart while yet he defended Edwin. But a shout was heard from the door: a faint cry was heard at his side.—He looked around. Edwin lay extended on the ground, with an arrow quivering in his breast: his closing eyes still looked upwards to his friend. The beam fell from the hands of Wallace. He threw himself on his knees beside him. The dying boy pressed his hand to his heart, and dropped his head upon his bosom.—Wallace moved not, spoke not. His hand was bathed in the blood of his friend, but not a pulse beat beneath it; no breath warmed the paralysed chill of his face, as it hung over the motionless lips of Edwin.

The men were more terrified at this unresisting stillness, than at the invincible prowess of his arm, and stood gazing on him in mute wonder. But Monteith, in whom the fell appetite of avarice had destroyed every perception of humanity, sent in other ruffians with new orders to bind Wallace. They approached him with terror: two of the strongest, stealing behind him, and taking advantage of his face being bent upon that of his murdered Edwin, each in the same moment seized his hands. As they gripped them fast, and others advanced eagerly to fasten the bands, he looked calmly up: but it was a dreadful calm; it spoke of despair; of the full completion of all woe.—'Bring chains,' cried one of the men, 'he will burst these thongs.'

'You may bind me with a hair,' said he; 'I contend no more.' The bonds were fastened on his wrists; and, then, turning towards the lifeless body of Edwin, he raised

it gently in his arms. The rosy red of youth, yet tinged his cold cheek: his parted lips, still beamed with the same; but the breath that had so sweetly informed them, was flown.—'O! my best brother that ever I had !' cried Wallace, in a sudden transport, and kissing his pale forehead; 'My sincerest friend, in my greatest need! In thee was truth, manhood, and nobleness; in thee was all man's fidelity, with woman's tenderness. My friend, my brother, Oh! would to God I had died for thee!'

CHAPTER L

THE THAMES

After the murder of his youthful friend, Wallace had been loaded with irons; and conveyed, so unresistingly that he seemed in a stupor, on board a vessel, to be carried without loss of time to the Tower of London. Sir John Monteith, though he never ventured into his sight, attended as the accuser, who, to put a vizard on cruelty, was to swear away his victim's life. The horror and grief of Ruthven, at these tidings, were unutterable: and Scrymgeour, to turn the tide of the bereaved father's thoughts, to the inspiring recollection of the early glory of his son, proceeded to narrate,—that he found the beauteous remains in the hovel, but bedecked with flowers by the village girls. They were weeping over it, and lamenting the pitiless heart which could slay such youth and loveliness. To bury him in so obscure a spot, Scrymgeour would not allow; and he had sent Stephen Ireland with the sacred corse to Dumbarton, with orders to see him entombed in the chapel of that fortress.—'It is done,' continued the worthy knight, 'and those towers he so bravely scaled, will stand for ever the monument of Edwin Ruthven.'—'Scrymgeour,' said the stricken father, 'the shafts fall thick upon us, but we must fulfil our duty.' Cautious of inflicting too heavy a blow on the fortitude of

his wife and of Helen, he commanded Grimsby, and Hay, to withhold from everybody at Hunting-tower, the tidings of its young Lord's fate; but he believed it his duty not to delay the letter of Wallace to Bruce, and the dreadful information to him, of Monteith's treachery. Ruthven ended his short epistle to his wife, by saying he should soon follow his messenger; but that at present, he could not bring himself to entirely abandon the Lowlands, to even a temporary empire of the seditious chiefs.

On Grimsby's arrival at Hunting-tower, he was conducted immediately to Bruce. Some cheering symptoms having appeared that morning, he had just exchanged his bed for a couch, when Grimsby entered the room. The countenance of the honest Southron, was the harbinger of his news. Lady Helen started from her seat; and Bruce stretching out his arm, eagerly caught the packets the soldier presented. Isabella inquired if all were well with Sir William Wallace. But ere he could make an answer, Lady Ruthven ran breathless into the room, holding out the opened letter brought by Hay to her. Bruce had just read the first line of his, which announced the captivity of Wallace; and, with a groan, that pierced through the souls of every one present, he made an attempt to spring from the couch; but in the act he reeled, and fell back in a fearful, but mute mental agony. The apprehensive heart of Helen, guessed some direful explanation; she looked with speechless inquiry upon her aunt and Grimsby. Isabella and Ercildown hastened to Bruce; and Lady Ruthven, being too much appalled in her own feelings, to think for a moment on the aghast Helen, hurriedly read to her from Lord Ruthven's letter, the brief but decisive account of Wallace's dangerous situation—his seizure, and conveyance to the Tower of England. Helen listened without a word: her heart seemed locked within her; her brain was on fire; and gazing fixedly on the floor while she listened, all else that was transacted around her passed unnoticed.

The pangs of a convulsion fit, did not long shackle the determined Bruce. The energy of his spirit, struggling to gain the side of Wallace in this his extremest need (for he well knew Edward's implacable soul,) roused him from his worse than swoon.—With his extended arms dashing away the restoratives with which both Isabella and Ercildown hung over him, he would have leaped on the floor, had not the latter held him down. 'Withhold me not!' cried he; 'this is not the time for sickness and indulgence. My friend is in the fangs of the tyrant, and shall I lie here?—No, not for all the empires in the globe, will I be detained another hour.

'To-morrow's dawn sees me in the path to snatch my best treasure, my counsellor, my guide, from the judgment of his enemies—or woe to England; woe to all Scotland born, who have breathed one hostile word against his sacred life!—Helen, dost thou hear me?' cried he: 'Wilt thou not assist me, to persuade thy too timid sister, that her Bruce's honour, his happiness, lives in the preservation of his friend? Speak to her, counsel her, sweet Helen; and, please the Almighty arm of Heaven, I will reward thy tenderness with the return of Wallace!'

Helen gazed intently on him while he spoke. She smiled when he ended, but she did not answer; and there was a wild vacancy in the smile, that seemed to say she knew not what had been spoken, and that her thoughts were far away. Without further regarding him, or any present, she arose and left the room. At this moment of fearful abstraction, her whole soul was bent, with an intensity that touched on madness, on the execution of a project, which had rushed into her mind in the moment she heard of Wallace's deathful captivity and destination.

The approach of night favoured her design. Hurrying to her chamber, she dismissed her maids with the prompt excuse that she was ill, and desired not to be disturbed till morning; then bolting the door, she quickly habited herself in the page's clothes, which she had so carefully

preserved, as the dear memorial of her happy days in France; and dropping from her window into the pleasance beneath, ran swiftly through its woody precincts towards Dundee.

Before she arrived at the suburbs of Perth, her tender feet became so blistered, she found the necessity of stopping at the first cottage. But her perturbed spirits rendered it impossible for her to take rest; and she answered the hospitable offer of its humble owner, with a request that he would go into the town, and immediately purchase a horse, to carry her that night to Dundee. She put her purse into the man's hand; who without further discussion obeyed. When the animal was brought, and the honest Scot returned her the purse with its remaining contents, she divided them with him; and turning from his thanks, mounted the horse, and rode away.

About an hour before dawn, she arrived within view of the ships lying in the harbour of Dundee. At this sight, she threw herself off the panting animal, and leaving it to rest and liberty, hastened to the beach. A gentle breeze blew freshly from the north-west; and several vessels were heaving their anchors, to get under weigh. 'Are any,' demanded she, 'bound for the Tower of London?'—'None,' were the replies. Despair was now in her heart and gesture. But suddenly recollecting, that in dressing herself for flight, she had not taken off the jewels she usually wore, she exclaimed with renovated hope, 'Will not gold tempt some one to carry me thither?' A rough Norwegian sailor jumped from the side of the nearest vessel, and readily answered in the affirmative. 'My life,' rejoined she, 'or a necklace of pearls, shall be yours, in the moment you land me at the Tower of London.' The man, seeing the youth and agitation of the seeming boy, doubted his power to perform so magnificent a promise, and was half inclined to retract his assent; but Helen, pointing to a jewel on her finger, as a proof that she did not speak of things beyond her reach, he no longer

hesitated; and pledging his word, that, wind and tide in his favour, he would land her at the Tower stairs;—she, as if all happiness must meet her at that point, sprang into his vessel. The sails were unfurled: the voices of the men chanted forth their cheering responses, on clearing the harbour; and Helen, throwing herself along the floor of her little cabin, in that prostration of body and soul, silently breathed her thanks to God, for being indeed launched on the ocean, whose waves, she trusted, would soon convey her to Wallace. To soothe, to serve,—to die, or to compass the release of him who had sacrificed more than his life for her father's preservation—for him who had saved herself from worse than death.

On the evening of the fourteenth day from the one in which Helen had embarked, the little ship of Dundee entered on the bright bosom of the Nore. While she sat on the deck, watching the progress of the vessel with an eager spirit, which would gladly have taken wings to have flown to the object of her voyage, she first saw the majestic waters of the Thames. But it was a tyrannous flood to her, and she marked not the diverging shores crowned with palaces; her eyes looked over every stately dome, to seek the black summits of the Tower. At a certain point, the captain of the vessel spoke through his trumpet, to summon a pilot from the land. In a few minutes he was obeyed. The Englishman took the helm. Helen was reclined on a coil of ropes near him. He entered into conversation with the Norwegian; and she listened in speechless attention to a recital, which bound up her every sense in that of hearing. The captain had made some unprincipled jest on the present troubles of Scotland, now his adopted country from his commercial interests; and, he added with a laugh, 'that he thought any ruler the right one who gave him a free course for traffic.' In answer to his remark, and with an observation not very flattering to the Norwegian's estimation of right and wrong, the Englishman mentioned the capture of the once renowned

champion of Scotland. Even the enemy who recounted the particulars, showed a ruth in the recital, which shamed the man who had benefited by the patriotism he affected to despise, and for which Sir William Wallace was now likely to shed his blood.

'I was present,' continued the pilot, 'when the brave Scot was put on the raft, which carried him through the traitor's gate into the Tower. His hands and feet were bound with iron; but his head, owing to faintness from the wounds he had received at Lumloch, was so bent down on his breast, as he reclined on the float, that I could not then see his face. There was a great pause: for none of us, when he did appear in sight, could shout over the downfall of so merciful a conqueror. Many were spectators of this scene, whose lives he had spared on the fields of Scotland; and my brother was amongst them. However, that I might have a distinct view of the man who has so long held our warlike monarch in dread, I went to West-minister-hall on the day appointed for his trial. The great judges of the land, and almost all the lords besides, were there; and a very grand spectacle they made. But when the hall door was opened, and the dauntless prisoner appeared, then it was that I saw true majesty; King Edward on his throne, never looked with such a royal air. His very chains seemed given to be graced by him, as he moved through the parting crowd with the step of one who had been used to have all his accusers at his feet. Though pale with loss of blood, and his countenance bore traces of the suffering occasioned by the state of his yet unhealed wounds, his head was now erect, and he looked with undisturbed dignity on all around. The Earl of Gloucester, whose life and liberty he had granted at Berwick, sat on the right of the Lord Chancellor. Bishop Beck, the Lords de Valence and Soulis, with one Monteith (who it seems was the man that betrayed him into our hands,) charged him with high treason against the life of King Edward, and the peace of his Majesty's realms

of England and Scotland. Grievous were the accusations brought against him; and bitter the revilings with which he was denounced as a traitor too mischievous to deserve any show of mercy. The Earl of Gloucester at last rose indignantly, and, in energetic and respectful terms, called on Sir William Wallace, by the reverence in which he held the tribunal of future ages, to answer for himself!

'"On this adjuration, brave earl!" replied he, "I will speak!"—O! men of Scotland, what a voice was that! In it was all honesty and nobleness! and a murmur arose from some who feared its power, which Gloucester was obliged to check, by exclaiming aloud with a stern countenance,—"Silence, while Sir William Wallace answers. He who disobeys, sergeant-at-arms, take into custody!" A pause succeeded; and the chieftain, with the godlike majesty of truth, denied the possibility of being a traitor, where he never had owed allegiance. But with a matchless fearlessness, he avowed the facts alleged against him, which told the havoc he had made of the English on the Scottish plains, and the devastations he had afterwards wrought in the lands of England. "It was a son," cried he, "defending the orphans of his father, from the steel and rapine of a treacherous friend! It was the sword of restitution, gathering, on that false friend's fields, the harvests he had ravaged from theirs!" He spoke more, and nobly, too nobly for them who heard him. They rose to a man, to silence what they could not confute;—and the sentence of death was pronounced on him;—the cruel death of a traitor! The Earl of Gloucester turned pale on his seat; but the countenance of Wallace was unmoved. As he was led forth, I followed; and saw the young Le de Spencer, with several other reprobate gallants of our court, ready to receive him. With shameful mockery they threw laurels on his head, and, with torrents of derision, told him—it was meet they should so salute the champion of Scotland! Wallace glanced on them a look, which spoke pity, rather than contempt; and, with a serene counte-

nance, he followed the warden towards the Tower. The hirelings of his accusers loaded him with invectives as he passed along; but the populace, who beheld his noble mien, with those individuals who had heard of, while many had felt, his generous virtues, deplored and wept his sentence. To-morrow, at sunrise, he dies.'

Helen's face being overshadowed by the low brim of her hat, the agony of her mind could not have been read in her countenance, had the good Southron been sufficiently uninterested in his story to regard the sympathy of others; but as soon as he had uttered the last dreadful words, 'to-morrow, at sunrise, he dies!' she started from her seat; her horror-struck senses apprehended nothing further, and turning to the Norwegian, 'Captain,' cried she, 'I must reach the Tower this night!'—'Impossible,' was the reply: 'the tide will not take us up till to-morrow at noon.'—'Then the waves shall!' cried she, and frantically rushing towards the ship's side, she would have thrown herself into the water, had not the pilot caught her arm. 'Boy!' said he, 'are you mad? your action, your looks—'—'No,' interrupted she, wringing her hands; 'but in the Tower I must be this night, or—Oh! God of mercy, end my misery!' The unutterable anguish of her voice, countenance, and gesture, excited a suspicion in the Englishman, that this youth was connected with the Scottish chief; and not choosing to hint his surmise to the unfeeling Norwegian, in a different tone he exhorted Helen to composure, and offered her his own boat, which was then towed at the side of the vessel, to take her to the Tower. Helen grasped the pilot's rough hand, and in a paroxysm of gratitude pressed it to her lips; then forgetful of her engagements with the insensible man who stood unmoved by his side, sprang into the boat. The Norwegian followed her, and in a threatening tone demanded his hire. She now recollected it; and putting her hand into her vest, gave him the string of pearls which had been her necklace. He was satisfied, and the boat pushed off.

The cross, the cherished memorial of her hallowed meeting with Wallace in the chapel of Snawdoun, and which always hung suspended on her bosom, was now in her hand, and pressed close to her heart. The rowers plied their oars; and her eyes, with a gaze, as if they would pierce the horizon, looked intently onward, while the men laboured through the tide. Even to see the walls, which contained Wallace, seemed to promise her a degree of comfort she dared hardly hope herself fated to enjoy. At last the awful battlements of England's state prison, rose before her. She could not mistake them. 'That is the Tower,' said one of the rowers. A shriek escaped her; and instantly covering her face with her hands, she tried to shut from her sight those very walls she had so long sought amongst the clouds. They imprisoned Wallace! He groaned within their confines! and their presence paralysed her heart.

'Shall I die, before I reach thee, Wallace?' was the question her almost flitting soul uttered, as she, trembling, yet with swift steps, ascended the stone stairs which led from the water's edge to the entrance of the Tower. She flew through the different courts, to the one in which stood the prison of Wallace. One of the boatmen, being bargeman to the governor of the Tower, as a privileged person conducted her unmolested through every ward, till she reached the place of her destination. There she dismissed him, with a ring from her finger as his reward; and passing a body of soldiers, who kept guard before a large porch that led to the dungeons, she entered, and found herself in an immense paved room. A single sentinel stood at the end, near to an iron grating, or small portcullis: there, then, was Wallace! Forgetting her disguise and situation, in the frantic eagerness of her pursuit, she hastily advanced to the man:—'Let me pass to Sir William Wallace,' cried she, 'and treasures shall be your reward!' 'Whose treasures? my pretty page,' demanded the soldier: 'I dare not, were it at the suit of the Countess of Gloucester

herself.'—'O!' cried Helen; 'for the sake of a greater than any countess in the land, take this jewelled bracelet, and let me pass!'

The man, at sight of the diamonds, supposing the page must come from the good queen, no longer demurred. Putting the bracelet into his bosom, he whispered Helen, that as he granted this permission at the risk of his life, she must conceal herself in the interior chamber of the prisoner's dungeon, should any person from the warden visit him during their interview. She readily promised this: and he informed her that, when through this door, she must cross two other apartments, the bolts to the entrances of which she must undraw; and then, at the extremity of a long passage, a door, fastened by a latch, would admit her to Sir William Wallace. With these words, the soldier removed the massy bars, and Helen entered.

CHAPTER LI

THE TOWER OF LONDON

Helen's fleet steps carried her in a few minutes through the intervening dungeons, to the door which would restore to her eyes the being with whose life her existence seemed blended. The bolts had yielded to her hands. The iron latch now gave way; and the ponderous oak, grating dismally on its hinges, she looked forward, and beheld the object of all her solicitude leaning along a couch; a stone table was before him, at which he seemed writing. He raised his head at the sound. The peace of virtue was in his eyes; and a smile on his lips, as if he had expected some angel visitant.

The first glance at his pale, but heavenly countenance, struck to the heart of Helen; veneration, anguish, shame, all rushed on her at once. She was in his presence! but how might he turn from consolations he had not sought! The intemperate passion of her stepmother now glared

before her: his contempt of the Countess's unsolicited advances, appeared ready to be extended to her rash daughter-in-law; and, with an irrepressible cry, which seemed to breathe out her life, Helen would have fled; but her failing limbs bent under her, and she fell senseless into the dungeon. Wallace started from his reclining position. He thought his senses must deceive him,—and yet the shriek was Lady Helen's. He had heard the same cry on the Pentland hills; in the chamber of Château Galliard! He arose agitated; he approached the prostrate youth; and bending to the inanimate form, took off the Norman hat; he parted the heavy locks which fell over her brow, and recognised the features of her who alone had ever shared his meditations with his Marion. He sprinkled water on her face and hands: he touched her cheek; it was ashy cold, and the chill struck to his heart. 'Helen!' exclaimed he; 'Helen, awake! Speak to thy friend!'

Still she was motionless. 'Dead!' cried he, with increased emotion. His eye and his heart in a moment discerned and understood the rapid emaciation of those lovely features—now fearing the worst; 'Gone so soon!' repeated he.—'Gone to tell my Marion that her Wallace comes. Blessed angel!' cried he, clasping her to his breast with an energy of which he was not aware, 'take me, take me with thee!' The pressure, the voice, roused the dormant life of Helen. With a torturing sigh, she unsealed her eyes from the deathlike load that oppressed them, and found herself in the arms of Wallace.

All her wandering senses, which from the first promulgation of his danger had been kept in a bewildered state, now rallied; and, in recovered sanity, smote her to the soul. Though still overwhelmed with grief at the fate which threatened to tear him from her and life, she now wondered how she could ever have so trampled on the retreating modesty of her nature, as to have brought herself thus into his presence; and in a voice of horror, of despair, believing that she had for ever destroyed herself in his opinion, she

exclaimed, 'O! Wallace! how came I here?—I am lost,—and innocently;—but God—the pure God! can read the soul.'

It was the disinterested dictates of a pure, though agitated spirit, which, he now was convinced, did most exclusively love him, but with the passion of an angel; and the tears of a sympathy, which spoke their kindred natures, stole from his eyes as he bent his cheek on her head. She felt them; and rejoicing in such an assurance, that she yet possessed his esteem, a blessed calm diffused itself over her mind, and raising herself with a look of virtuous confidence, she exclaimed, 'Then you do understand me, Wallace? you pardon me this apparent forgetfulness of my sex; and you recognise a true sister in Helen Mar? I may administer to that noble heart, till——' she paused, turned deadly pale, and then clasping his hand in both hers, in bitter agony added, 'till we meet in heaven!'

'And blissful, dearest saint, will be our union there,' replied he, 'where soul meets soul, unencumbered of these earthly fetters; and mingles with each other, even as thy tender tear-drops now glide into mine!

'Ah!' cried Helen, throwing herself on her knees in holy enthusiasm; 'join then your prayers with mine, most revered of friends, that I may be admitted into such blessedness! Petition our God to forgive me; and do you forgive me, that I have sometimes envied the love you bear your Marion! But I now love her so entirely, that to be hers, and your ministering spirit in Paradise, would amply satisfy my soul.'—'O! Helen,' cried Wallace, grasping her uplifted hands in his, and clasping them to his heart, 'thy soul and Marion's are indeed one, and as one I love ye!'

This unlooked for declaration, almost overpowered Helen in its flood of happiness; and, with a smile, which seemed to picture the very heavens opening before her, she turned her eyes from him, to a crucifix which stood on the table, and bowing her head on its pedestal, was lost in the devotion of rapturous gratitude.

At this juncture, the Earl of Gloucester entered. At sight of him, Wallace, pointing to the kneeling Helen, beckoned him into the inner cell, where his straw pallet lay; and there, in a low voice, declared who she was; and requested the Earl to use his authority, to allow her to remain with him to the last.

'After that,' said he, 'I rely on you, generous Gloucester, to convey safely back to her country, a being, who seems to have nothing of earth about her, but the terrestrial body which enshrines her angelic soul!'

The sound of a voice speaking with Wallace, aroused Helen from her happy trance. Alarmed that it might be the fatal emissaries of the tyrant, come prematurely to summon him to his last hour, she started on her feet; 'Where are you, Wallace?' cried she, looking distractedly around her; 'I must be with you, even in death!'

Hearing her fearful cry, he hastened into the dungeon, and relieved her immediate terror, by naming the Earl of Gloucester, who followed him.

Helen, who had risen, in her energy of speech and supplication, suddenly paused;—clasped her hands, and stood with upward eyes;—looking as if she beheld the beatified object of her invocation.

'Dearest sister of my soul!' cried Wallace, who had forborne to interrupt her, taking her clasped hands in his, 'thy knees shall never bend to any less, than to the blessed Lord of all mankind, for me! Did He will my longer pilgrimage on this earth, of which my spirit is already weary, it would not be in the power of any human tyrant, to hold me in these bonds.—And, for Edward! believe, that not all thy tender eloquence, could make one impression, where a long obdurate ambition hath set so deep a seal.'

Gloucester contemplated this chaste union of two spotless hearts, with an admiration almost amounting to devotion. 'Noble lady,' said he, 'the message that I came to impart to Sir William Wallace, bears with it a show of

hope; and, I trust, that your gentle spirit will yet be as persuasive, as consolatory. A deputation has just arrived from our border-counties, headed by the good Barons De Hilton and De Blenkinsopp, praying the royal mercy for their gallant foe; who had been most generous to them, they set forth, in their extremity. And the King was listening to them, with what temper I know not, when a private embassy, as opportunely, made its appearance from France, on the same errand. In short, to negociate with Edward, for the safety of our friend, as a prince of that realm. I left the ambassadors,' continued the Earl, turning to Wallace, 'in debate with his Majesty; and he has at length granted a suspension; nay, has even promised a repeal of the horrible injustice, that was to be completed to-morrow; if you can be brought to accord with certain proposals, now to be laid before you.—Accept them, and Edward will comply with all King Philip's demands in your behalf.'

'Then you will accept them?' cried Helen, in a tumult of suspense. The communication of Gloucester, had made no change in the equable pulse of Wallace; and he replied, with a look of tender pity upon her animated countenance, 'The proposals of Edward, are too likely to be snares for that honour, which I would bear with me uncontaminated to the grave. Therefore, dearest consoler of my last hours, do not give way to hopes, which a greater King than Edward, may command me to disappoint.' Helen bowed her head in silence. The colour again faded from her cheek, and despair once more seized on her heart.

Gloucester resumed; and, after narrating some particulars concerning the conference between the King and the ambassadors, he suggested the impracticability of secretly retaining Lady Helen, for any length of time, in the state dungeon. 'I dare not,' continued he, 'be privy to her presence here, and yet conceal it from the King. I know not what messengers he may send, to impart his conditions to you; and should she be discovered, Edward,

doubly incensed, would tear her from you; and, as an accessory, so involve me in his displeasure, that I should be disabled from serving either of you further. Were I so to honour his feelings as a man, as to mention it to him, I do not believe that he would oppose her wishes; but how to reveal such a circumstance, with any regard to her fair fame, I know not; for all are not sufficiently virtuous, to believe her spotless innocence.' Helen hastily interrupted Gloucester, and with firmness said, 'When I entered these walls, the world and I parted for ever. The good, or the evil opinion, of the impure in heart, can never affect me:—they shall never see me more. The innocent will judge me by themselves, and by the end of my race. I came to minister with a sister's duty, to my own and my father's preserver; and while he abides here, I will never consent to leave his feet. When he goes hence, if it be to bless mankind again, I shall find the longest life too short to pour forth all my gratitude; and for that purpose I will dedicate myself in some nunnery of my native land. But should he be taken from a world, so unworthy of him,—soon, very soon, I shall cease to feel its aspersions, in the grave.'

'No aspersions, which I can avert, dearest Helen,' cried Wallace, 'shall ever tarnish the fame of one, whose purity can only be transcended by her who is now made perfect in heaven! Consent, noblest of women, to wear for the few days I may yet linger here, a name, which thy sister angel has sanctified to me. Give me a legal right to call you mine, and Edward himself will not then dare to divide what God has joined together!'

Helen paused—even her heart seemed to cease its pulsation, in the awful moment. Did she hear aright? and was she indeed going to invade the rights of the wife, she had so often vowed to regard as the sole object of Wallace's dearest wishes? Oh, no: it was not the lover, that shone in his luminous eyes; it was not the mistress that glowed in her bosom. Words might be breathed; but no change would be wrought in the souls of them, who were

already separated from the earth. With these thoughts Helen turned towards Wallace; she attempted to answer, but the words died on the seraphic smile which beamed upon her lips, and she dropped her head upon his breast.

Gloucester, who saw no other means of ensuring to his friend the comfort of her society, was rejoiced at this mutual resolution. He had longed to propose it; but considering the peculiarities of their situation, knew not how to do so, without seeming to mock their sensibility and fate. It was now near midnight: and having read the consent of Helen, in the tender emotion which denied her speech, without further delay he quitted the apartment, to summon the confessor of the warden to unite their hands.

On his re-entrance, he found Helen sitting, dissolved in tears, with her hand clasped in his friend's. The sacred rite was soon performed, which endowed her with all the claims upon Wallace, which her devoted heart had so long contemplated with resigned hopelessness:—to be his helpmate on earth, his partner in the tomb, his dear companion in heaven! With the last benediction, she threw herself on her knees before him, and put his hand to her lips in eloquent silence. Gloucester, with a look of kind farewell, withdrew with the priest.

'Thou noble daughter, of the noblest Scot!' said Wallace, raising her from the ground, 'this bosom is thy place, and not my feet. Long, it will not be given me to hold thee here: but even in the hours or years of our separation, my spirit will hover near thee, to bear thine to our everlasting home.'

The heart of Helen alternately beat violently, and stopped, as if the vital currents were suddenly impeded. Hope and fear agitated her by turns; but clinging to the flattering ideas, which the arrival of the ambassadors had excited, she timidly breathed a hope, that, by the present interference of King Philip, Edward might not be found inexorable.

'Disturb not the holy composure of your soul, by such an expectation,' returned Wallace; 'I know my adversary too well, to anticipate his relinquishing the object of his vengeance, but at a price more infamous than the most ignoble death. Therefore, best-beloved of all on earth! look for no deliverance for thy Wallace, but what passes through the grave; and to me, dearest Helen, its gates are on golden hinges turning; for all is light and bliss which shines on me from within their courts!'

Helen's thoughts, in the idea of his being torn from her, could not wrest themselves from the direful images of his execution; she shuddered, and in faltering accents replied, 'Ah! could we glide from sleep, into so blessed a death, I would hail it, even for thee! But the threatened horrors; should they fall on thy sacred head, will in that hour, I trust, also divorce my soul from this grievous world!'

'Not so, my Helen,' returned he, 'keep not thy dear eyes for ever fixed on the gloomy appendages of death. The scaffold, and the grave, have nought to do with the immortal soul; it cannot be wounded by the one, nor confined by the other. And, is not the soul, thy full and perfect Wallace? It is that, which now speaks to thee; which will cherish thy beloved idea, for ever. Lament not then, how soon this body, its mere apparel, is laid down in the dust. But rejoice still in my existence, which, through Him who "led captivity captive," will never know a pause! Comfort then thy heart, my soul's dear sister, and sojourn a little while on this earth, to bear witness for thy Wallace, to the friends he loves.'

Helen, who felt the import of his words in her heart, gently bowed her head, and he proceeded:—

'As the first who stemmed with me the torrent, which, with God's help, we so often laid into a calm, I mention to you my faithful men of Lanark. Many of them bled, and died in the contest; and to their orphans, with the children of those who yet survive, I consign all of the world's wealth that yet belongs to William Wallace:

Ellerslie and its estates are theirs.[1]—To Bruce, my sovereign and my friend—the loved companion of the hour in which I freed you, my Helen, from the arms of violence! To him I bequeath this heart, knit to him by bonds more dear than even loyalty. Bear it to him; and when he is summoned to his heavenly throne, then let his heart and mine fill up one urn. To Lord Ruthven, to Bothwell, to Lockhart, to Scrymgeour, and to Kirkpatrick, I give my prayers and blessings.'

Here Wallace paused. Helen had listened to him with a holy attention, which hardly allowed a sigh to breathe from her steadfast heart; she spoke; but the voice was scarcely audible:—'And what for him, who loves you, dearer than life? for Edwin? He cannot be forgotten!' Wallace started at this: then she was ignorant of the death of that too faithful friend! In a hurrying accent he replied, 'Never forgotten! Oh! Helen! I asked for him life; and Heaven gave him long life, even for ever and ever!' Helen's eyes met his, with a look of awful inquiry; 'That would mean he is gone before you?' The countenance of Wallace answered her. 'Happy Edwin!' cried she, and the tears rained over her cheeks, as she bent her head on her arms. Wallace continued: 'He laid down his life, to preserve mine, in the hovel of Lumloch. The false Monteith could get no Scot to lay hands on their true defender; and even the foreign ruffians he brought to the task, might have spared the noble boy, but an arrow from the traitor himself, pierced his heart. Contention was then no more, and I resigned myself to follow him.'

'What a desert does the world become!' exclaimed Helen; then turning on Wallace with a saint-like smile, she added, 'I would hardly now withhold you. You will bear him Helen's love, and tell him, how soon I shall be with you. If our Father will not allow my heart to break, in His mercy He may take my soul, in the prayers which I shall hourly breathe to Him!'—'Thou hast been lent to

[1] This bequest of Wallace is a fact.

me, as my sweet consolation here, my Helen,' replied he; 'and the Almighty dispenser of that comfort, will not long banish you from the object of your innocent wishes.'

While they thus poured into each other's bosoms the ineffable balm of friendship's purest tenderness, the eyes of Wallace insensibly closed. 'Your gentle influence,' gently murmured he, 'brings that sleep to my eyelids, which has not visited them since I first entered these walls. Like my Marion, Helen, thy presence brings healing on its wings.'—'Sleep, then,' replied she, 'and Marion's angel spirit will keep watch with mine.'

CHAPTER LII

TOWER HILL

Though all the furies of the elements seemed let loose, to rage around the walls of the dungeon, still Wallace slept in the loud uproar. Calm was within; and the warfare of the world could not disturb the balmy rest into which the angel of peace had steeped his senses. From this profound repose, he was awakened by the entrance of Gloucester. Helen had just sunk into a slight slumber; but the first words of the Earl aroused her, and rising, she followed her beloved Wallace to his side.

Gloucester put a scroll into the hand of Wallace:—'Sign that,' said he, 'and you are free. I know not its contents; but the King commissioned me, as a mark of his grace, to be the messenger of your release.'

Wallace read the conditions; and the colour deepened on his cheek, as his eye met each article. 'He was to reveal the asylum of Bruce; to forswear Scotland for ever; and to take an oath of allegiance to Edward; the seal of which should be the English earldom of Cleveland!' Wallace closed the parchment. 'King Edward knows well what will be my reply; I need not speak it.'—'You will accept his terms?' asked the Earl.

'Not to ensure me a life of ages, with all earthly bliss my portion! I have spoken to these offers before. Read them, my noble friend; and then give him, as mine, the answer that would be yours.' Gloucester obeyed; and while his eyes were bent on the parchment, those of Helen were fixed on her almost worshipped husband: she looked through his beaming countenance, into his very soul; and there saw the sublime purpose that consigned his unbending head to the scaffold. When Gloucester had finished, covered with the burning blush of shame, he crushed the disgraceful scroll in his hand; and exclaimed, with honourable vehemence, against the deep duplicity, and deeper cruelty of his father-in-law, so to mock, by base subterfuges, the embassy of France, and its noble object.

'This is the morning in which I was to have met my fate!' replied Wallace. 'Tell this tyrant of the earth, that I am even now ready to receive the last stroke of his injustice. In the peaceful grave, my Helen,' added he, turning to her, who sat pale and aghast, 'I shall be beyond his power!' Gloucester walked the room, in great disturbance of mind; while Wallace continued, in a lowered tone, to recall some perception of his own consolations, to the abstracted and soulstruck Helen. The Earl stopped suddenly before them: 'That the King did not expect your acquiescence, without some hesitation, I cannot doubt; for when I informed him the Lady Helen Mar, now your wife, was the sharer of your prison, he started, and told me, that should you still oppose yourself to his conditions, I must bring her to him; who might, perhaps, be the means of persuading you to receive his mercy.'

'Never!' replied Wallace; 'I reject what he calls mercy. He has no rights of judgment over me; and his pretended mercy is an assumption, which, as a true Scot, I despise. He may rifle me of my life, but he shall never beguile me into any acknowledgment of an authority that is false. No wife, nor aught of mine, shall ever stand before him as a suppliant, for William Wallace. I will die, as I have

lived; the equal of Edward in all things but a crown; and his superior, in being true to the glory of prince or peasant —unblemished honour!'

'I come,' said Gloucester, 'not to urge you to send Lady Helen, as a suitor to King Edward; but to spare her the misery of being separated from you, while life is yours.' He then said, that the French ambassadors were kept in ignorance of the conditions which were offered to the object of their mission; and, on being informed that he had refused them, they showed themselves so little satisfied with the sincerity of what had been done, that Edward thought it expedient to conciliate Philip, by taking some pains to dislodge their suspicions. To this effect, he proposed to the French lords, sending his final propositions to Sir William Wallace by that chieftain's wife, who, he found, was then his companion in the Tower. 'On my intimating,' continued the Earl, 'that I feared she would be unable to appear before him, his answer was:—"Let her see to that: such a refusal shall be answered by an immediate separation from her husband." '

'Let me, in this demand,' cried she, turning with collected firmness to Wallace, 'satisfy the will of Edward. It is only to purchase my continuance with you. Trust me, noblest of men; I should be unworthy of the name you have given me, could I sully it, in my person, by one debasing word or action, to the author of all our ills!' As Gloucester took her hand, to lead her forth, Wallace clasped the other in his, 'Remember, my Helen,' cried he, 'that on no terms, but untrammelled freedom of soul, will your Wallace accept of life. This will not be granted by the man to whom you go; therefore, speak, and act, in his presence, as if I were already beyond the skies.'

After an absence of two hours, she returned to the dungeon of Wallace; and, as her trembling form was clasped in his arms, she exclaimed, in a passion of tears—'Here will I live! Here will I die! They may sever my soul from my body, but never again part me from this dear bosom!'

Though not absolutely present at the interview between his sovereign and Lady Helen, from the ante-room, Gloucester had heard all that passed; and he now briefly confessed to Wallace, that he had too truly appreciated the pretended conciliation of the King. Edward's proposals to Helen, were as artfully couched, as deceptive in their design. Their issue was, to make Wallace his slave, or to hold him his victim. In his conference with her, he addressed the vanity of an ambitious woman; then, all the affections of a devoted heart; he enforced his arguments, with persuasions to allure, and threats to compel obedience. In the last, he called up every image, to appal the soul of Helen; but, steadfast in the principles of her lord, while ready to sink under the menaced horrors of his fate, she summoned all her strength, to give utterance to her last reply.

'Mortal distinctions, King of England!' cried she, 'cannot bribe the wife of Sir William Wallace, to betray his virtues. His life is dear to me; but his immaculate faith to his God, and his lawful prince, are dearer. I can see him die, and live;—for I shall join him triumphant in heaven:—but to behold him dishonour himself! to counsel him so to do, is beyond my power—I should expire with grief, in the shameful moment.'

The indignation of the King, at this answer, was too oppressive of the tender nature of Lady Helen, for Gloucester to venture repeating it to her husband; and, while she turned deadly pale at the recollection, Wallace, exulting in her conduct, pressed her hand silently, but fervently to his lips.

The Earl resumed; but, observing the reawakened agonies of her mind, in her too expressive countenance, he strove to soften the blow he must inflict in the remainder of his narrative.

'Dearest lady,' said he, rather addressing her than Wallace, 'to convince your suffering spirit, that no earthly means have been left unessayed, to change the unjust

purpose of the King, know that when he quitted you, I left in his presence, the Queen, and my wife, both weeping tears of disappointment. On the moment when I found that arguments could no longer avail, I implored him, by every consideration of God and man, to redeem his honour, sacrificed by the unjust decree pronounced on Sir William Wallace. My entreaties were repulsed with anger; for the sudden entrance of Lord Athol, with fresh fuel to his flame, so confirmed his direful resolution, that, desperate for my friend, I threw myself on my knees. The Queen, and then my wife, both prostrate at his feet, enforced my suit; but all in vain: his heart seemed hardened by our earnestness; and his answer, while it put us to silence, granted Wallace a triumph even in his dungeon:—"Cease!" cried the King, "Wallace and I have now come to that issue, where one must fall. I shall use my advantage, though I should walk over the necks of half my kindred, to accomplish his fate. I can find no security on my throne, no peace in my bed, until I know that he, my direst enemy, is no more." '

'Sorry am I, generous Gloucester,' interrupted Wallace, 'that for my life, you have stooped your knee to one, so unworthy of your nobleness. Let, then, his tyranny take its course. But its shaft will not reach the soul, his unkingly spirit hopes to wound. The bitterness of death was past when I quitted Scotland. And for this body, he may dishonour it, mangle its limbs.'

Gloucester gazed on him, doubting the expression of his countenance. It was calm, but pale even to a marble hue. He could not reply, before the voice of the warden, calling to him that the hour of shutting the gates was arrived, compelled him to bid his friend farewell. He grasped the hand of Wallace, with a strong emotion; for he knew that the next time he should meet him, would be on the scaffold. During the moments of this parting, Helen, with her hands clasped on her knees, and her eyes bent downwards, inwardly and earnestly invoked the

Almighty, to endow her with fortitude to bear the horrors she was to witness: that she might not, by her agonies, add to the tortures of Wallace.

The cheering voice, that was ever music to her ears, recalled her from this devout abstraction. He laid his hand on hers, and gazing on her with tender pity, held such sweet discourse with her, on the approaching end of all his troubles; of his everlasting happiness, where 'all tears are dried away!' that she listened, and wept, and even smiled. She bent towards him, and fixed her lips to his. It was the first time they had met; his parting words still hung on them; and an icy cold ran through all her veins. She felt his heart beat heavily against hers, as he said,—'I have not many hours to be with thee, and yet a strange lethargy overpowers my senses; but, I shall speak to thee again!' He looked on her, as he spoke, with such a glance of holy love, that not doubting he was now bidding her indeed his last farewell; that he was to pass from this sleep, out of the power of man; she pressed his hand without a word; and, as he dropt his head back upon his pillow, with an awed spirit she saw him sink to profound repose.

Long and silently had she watched his rest. So gentle was his breath, that he scarcely seemed to breathe; and often, during her sad vigils, did she stoop her cheek to feel the respiration, which might still bear witness that his outraged spirit was yet fettered to earth. She tremblingly placed her hand on his heart, and still its warm beats spake comfort to hers.

The first rays of the dawn shown upon his peaceful face, just as the door opened, and a priest appeared. He held in his hands the sacred host, and the golden dove, for performing the rites of the dying.

Wallace accosted the priest with a reverential welcome; and then turning to Helen, tenderly whispered her, 'My Helen!—in this moment, of my last on earth, O! engrave on thy heart, that—in the sacred words of the patriarch of

Israel,— I *remember thee, in the kindness of thy youth!! in the love of thy desolate espousals to me! when thou camest after me, into the wilderness, into a land that thou didst not know;—and comforted me!*—And, shalt thou not, my soul's bride, be sacred unto our Lord? the Lord, of the widow, and the orphan!—to Him, I commit thee; in steadfast faith, that He will never forsake thee!' At that moment, the dismal toll of a bell sounded from the top of a tower. The heart of Helen paused. The warden, and his train, entered. 'I will follow him,' cried she, starting from her knees, 'into the grave itself!'

What was said, what was done, she knew not, till she found herself on the scaffold, upheld by the arm of Gloucester. Wallace stood before her, with his hands bound across, and his noble head uncovered. His eyes were turned upwards, with a martyr's confidence in the Power he served. A silence, as of some desert waste, reigned throughout the thousands who stood below. The executioner approached, to throw the rope over the neck of his victim. At this sight, Helen, with a cry, that was re-echoed by the compassionate spectators, rushed to his bosom. Wallace, with a mighty strength, burst the bands asunder which confined his arms, and clasped her to him with a force that seemed to make her touch his very heart; his breast heaved, as if his soul were breaking from its outraged tenement; and, while his head sunk on her neck, he exclaimed in a low, and interrupted voice— 'My prayer is heard!—Helen! Life's cord is cut by God's own hand;—May He preserve my country, and—O! trust from my youth!'—He stopped—he fell—and with the shock, the hastily erected scaffold shook to its foundation. The pause was dreadful.

The executioner approached the prostrate chief. Helen was still locked close in his arms. The man stooped, to raise his victim; but the attempt was beyond his strength. In vain he called on him—to Helen—to separate, and cease from delaying the execution of the law; no voice

Wallace on the Scaffold

replied, no motion answered his loud remonstrance. Gloucester, with an agitation which hardly allowed him power to speak or move, remembered the words of Wallace, 'that the rope of Edward, would never sully his animate body!' and, bending to his friend, he spoke: but all was silent there. He raised the chieftain's head; and, looking on his face, found indeed the indisputable stamp of death. 'There,' cried he, in a burst of grief, and letting it fall again upon the insensible bosom of Helen—'there broke the noblest heart, that ever beat in the breast of man!'

The priests, the executioners, crowded round him, at this declaration. But, while giving a command in a low tone to the warden, he took the motionless Helen in his arms; and, leaving the astonished group round the noble dead, carried her from the scaffold, back into the Tower.[1]

CHAPTER LIII

STIRLING

The tidings of the dreadful vengeance which Edward had taken against the Scottish nation, by pouring all his wrath upon the head of Wallace, struck like the lightning of heaven through the souls of men. None of either country, but those in the confidence of Gloucester, knew that Heaven had snatched him from the dishonour of so vile a death. The English turned, blushing, from each other; and ventured not to breathe the name of a man, whose virtues seemed to have found a sanctuary for his fame in every honest heart. But when the news reached Scotland, the indignation was general. All envying, all strifes were forgotten, in unqualified resentment of the deed. There was not a man, even amongst the late refractory chiefs, excepting the Cummins, and their coadjutors

[1] The last words of Wallace were from the 71st Psalm—'My trust from my youth! O Lord God, thou art my hope, unto the end!'

Soulis and Monteith, who really had believed that Edward seriously meant to sentence the Scottish patriot to a severer fate than what he had pronounced against his rebellious vassal, the exiled Baliol. The execution of Wallace, whose offence could only be that of having served his country too faithfully, was therefore so unexpected, that on the first promulgation of it, so great an abhorrence of the perpetrator was excited in every breast, that the whole country rose as one man, threatening to march instantly to London, and sacrifice the tyrant on his throne.

At this crisis, when the mountains of the north seemed heaving from their base, to overwhelm the blood-stained fields of England, every heart, which secretly rejoiced in the late sanguinary event, quailed within its possessor, as it tremblingly anticipated the consequences of the fall of Wallace. At this instant, when the furies armed every clan in Scotland, breathing forth revenge like a consuming fire before them, John Cummin, the Regent, stood aghast. He foresaw his own downfall, in this re-awakened enthusiasm respecting the man whom his treachery had been the first means of betraying to his enemies. Baffled in the aim of his ambition, by the very means he had taken to effect it, Cummin saw no alternative, but to throw himself at once upon the bounty of England; and, to this purpose, he bethought him of the only chance of preserving the power of Edward, and consequently his own, in Scotland. Knowing, by past events, that this tempest of the soul, excited by remorse in some, and gratitude in others, could only be maintained to any conclusive injury to England, by a royal hand, and that that hand was expected to be Bruce's; he determined at once, that the prince to whom he had sworn fealty, and to whom he owed his present elevation, should follow the fate of his friend. By the spies which he constantly kept round Hunting-tower, he was apprised that Bruce had set off towards London in a vessel from Dundee. On these

grounds, he sent a despatch to King Edward, informing him, that destiny had established him supreme lord of Scotland; for now its second, and its last hope, had put himself into his hands. With this intelligence, he gave a particular account of all Bruce's proceedings, from the time of his meeting Wallace in France, to his present following that chief to London. He then craved his Majesty's pardon, for having been betrayed into an union with such conspirators; and repeated his hope, that the restitution he now made, in thus showing the royal hand where to find its last opponent, would give full conviction of his penitence and duty. He closed his letter, by urging the King to take instant and effectual measures to disable Bruce from disturbing the quiet of Scotland, or ever again disputing his regal claims!

The word of Bruce was as irreversible, as his spirit was determined. No temptation of indulgence could seduce him from the one; no mischance of adversity could subdue the other. The standard of liberty had been raised by him and he carried it in his victorious arm, from east to west; from the most northern point of Sutherland, to the walls of Stirling: but there, the garrison which the treason of the late Regent had admitted into that citadel, gave a momentary check to his career. The English governor hesitated to surrender on the terms proposed; and while his first flag of truce was yet in the tent of the Scottish monarch, a second arrived to break off the negotiation. Whatever were the reasons for this abrupt determination, Bruce paid him not the compliment of asking a wherefore; but advancing his troops to the Southron outposts, drove them in with great loss; and approaching the lower works of the town by the road of Ballochgeich, so alarmed the governor, as to induce him to send forth several squadrons of horse to stop his progress. Vain was the attempt. They shrank before the resolute prince, and his enthusiastic followers. The governor despatched others; and at last marched out himself, to their support. No force seemed

able to withstand the pressing valour of the Scots. The Southron saw himself in the midst of his slain, and deserted by half of his surviving troops. A surrender, both of himself and his fainting companions, was now his only resource. His herald sounded a parley. The generous victor, in the midst of triumph listened to the offered capitulation. It was not to include the citadel of Stirling.

Bruce stopped the herald at this clause, and at once demanded the unconditional surrender of both the town and citadel. The governor, being aware that in his present state there was no alternative, and knowing the noble nature of the Prince who made the requisition, yielded to necessity, and resigned the whole into his hands.

Next morning Bruce entered Stirling as a conqueror, with the whole of his kingdom at his feet: for, from the Solway Frith to the Northern Ocean, no Scottish town, nor castle, owned a foreign master. The acclamations of a rescued people rent the skies; and, while prayers and blessings poured on him, from above, below, and around, he did indeed feel himself a king, and that he had returned to the land of his forefathers. While he sat on his proud war-horse, in front of the great gates of the citadel, now thrown wide asunder to admit its rightful sovereign, his noble prisoners came forward. They bent their knees before him; and delivering their swords, received in return his gracious assurance of mercy. At this moment, all Scottish hearts, and wishes, seemed riveted on their youthful monarch. Dismounting from his steed, with the grace that took captive even the souls of his enemies, he raised his helmet from his head, as the Bishop of Dunkeld, followed by all the ecclesiastics in the town, came forward to wait upon the triumph of their king.

The words, the scene, smote the heart of Bothwell; he turned aside, and wept. Where were now the buoyant feelings, with which he had followed the similar triumph

of Wallace, into these gates? 'Buried, thou martyred hero, in thy bloody grave!' New men, and new services seemed to have worn out remembrance of the past; but in the memories of even this joyous crowd, Wallace lived; though like a bright light, which had passed through their path, and was gone, never more to return.

On entering the citadel, Bruce was informed by Mowbray, the English governor, that he would find a lady there, in a frightful state of mental derangement, and who might need his protection. A question or two from the victorious monarch, told him this was the Countess of Strathearn. On the revolted abthanes having betrayed Wallace and his country to England, the joy and ambition of the Countess knew no bounds; and hoping to eventually persuade Edward to adjudge to her the crown, she made it apparent to the English king, how useful would be her services in Scotland; while with a plenary, though secret mission, she took her course through her native land, to discover who were inimical to the foreign interest, and who likely to promote her own: after this circuit, she fixed her mimic court at Stirling, and living there in regal magnificence, exercised the functions of a vice-queen. At this period, intelligence arrived, which the governor thought would fill her with exultation; and hastening to declare it, he proclaimed to her, that the King of England's authority was now firmly established in Scotland, for that on the twenty-third of August, Sir William Wallace had been executed in London, according to all the forms of law, upon the Tower-hill!

On the full declaration of this event, she fell senseless on the floor. It was not until the next morning that she recovered to perfect animation, and then her ravings were horrible and violent. She accused herself of the murder of Sir William Wallace. She seemed to hear him upbraid her with his fate; and her shrieks, and tremendous ejaculations, so fearfully presented the scene of his death before the eyes of her attendants, that her women fled; and none

others of that sex, would afterwards venture to approach her. In these fearful moments, the dreadful confession of all her premeditated guilt; of her infuriate, and disappointed passion for Wallace, and her vowed revenge; were revealed, under circumstances so shocking, that the English governor declared to the King of Scots, while he conducted him towards her apartment, that he would rather wear out his life in a rayless dungeon, then endure one hour of her agonies.

There was a dead silence in her chamber, as they approached the door. Mowbray cautiously opened it, and discovered the object of their visit. She was seated at the further end of the room on the floor; enveloped in a mass of scarlet velvet, she had drawn off her bed: her hands clasped her knees; and she bent forward, with her eyes fixed on the door, at which they entered. Her once dazzling beauty, was now transformed to a haggard glare: the terrible lightning, which gleamed on the face of Satan, when he sat brooding on the burning marl of Tartarus.

She remained motionless, as they advanced. But when Bruce stopped directly before her, contemplating with horror, the woman whom he regarded as one of the murderers of his most beloved friend, she sprang at once upon him, and clinging to him, with shrieks buried her head in his bosom, 'Save me! save me!' cried she. 'Mar drags me down to hell; I burn there, and yet I die not!' —Then bursting from Bruce, with an imprecation that froze his blood, she flew to the other side of the chamber, crying aloud, 'Thou hast torn out my heart!—Fiend, I took thee for Wallace—but I murdered him!' Her agonies, her yells, and her attempts at self-violence, were now so dreadful, that Bruce, raising her bleeding from the hearth on which she had furiously dashed her head, put her into the arms of the men who attended her; and then, with an awful sense of Divine retribution, left the apartment.

CHAPTER LIV

BANNOCKBURN

THE generality of his prisoners, Bruce directed should be kept safe in the citadel; but to Mowbray he gave his liberty; and ordered every means to facilitate the commodious journey of that brave knight; whom he had requested to convey the insane Lady Strathearn to the protection of her husband.

At the decline of day, Bruce returned to his camp, to pass the night in the field with his soldiers; intending next morning to give his last orders to the detachments, which he meant to send out under the command of Lennox and Douglas, to disperse themselves over the border-counties; and there keep station, till that peace should be signed by England, which he was determined, by unabated hostilities, to compel.

At the hour of the midnight watch, the trumpets of approaching heralds resounded without the camp. Bruce hastened to the council-tent, to receive the now anticipated tidings. The communications of Hambledon had given him reason to expect another struggle for his kingdom; and the message of the trumpets declared it might be a mortal one.

At the head of a hundred thousand men, Edward had forced a rapid passage through the Lowlands; and was now within a few hours' march of Stirling; fully determined to bury Scotland under her own slain, or, by one decisive blow, restore her to his empire.

When this was uttered by the English herald, Bruce turned to Ruthven with an heroic smile: 'Let him come, my brave barons! and he shall find that Bannockburn shall page with Cambus-Kenneth!'

The strength of the Scottish army did not amount to more than thirty thousand men, against this host of Southrons. But the relics of Wallace were there! His

spirit glowed in the heart of Bruce. The young monarch lost not the advantage of choosing his ground first; and therefore as his power was deficient in cavalry, he so took his field, as to compel the enemy to make it a battle of infantry alone.

To protect his exposed flank from the innumerable squadrons of Edward, he dug deep and wide pits near to Bannockburn; and having overlaid their mouths with turf and brushwood, proceeded to marshal his little phalanx on the shore of that brook, till his front stretched to St. Ninian's monastery.

The centre was led by Lord Ruthven, and Walter Stewart; the right, owned the valiant leading of Douglas and Ramsay, supported by the brave young Gordon with all his clan; and the left was put in charge of Lennox; with Sir Thomas Randolph, a crusade chieftain, who, like Lindsay and others, had lately returned from distant lands, and now zealously embraced the cause of his country.

Bruce stationed himself at the head of the reserve: with him, were the veterans Loch-awe and Kirkpatrick; and Lord Bothwell, with the true De Longueville, and the men of Lanark; all determined to make this division the stay of their little army; or the last sacrifice for Scottish liberty, and its martyred champion's corse. There, stood the sable hearse of Wallace; and the royal standard, struck deep into the native rock of the ground, waved its blood-red volumes over his sacred head.

'By that Heaven-sent palladium of our freedom,' cried Bruce, pointing to the bier, 'we must this day stand or fall. He who deserts it, murders William Wallace anew!'

At this appeal, the chiefs of each battalion assembled round the hallowed spot; and laying their hands on the pall, swore to fill up one grave with their dauntless Wallace, rather than yield the ground which he had rendered doubly precious, by having made it the scene and the

guerdon of his invincible deeds! When Kirkpatrick approached the side of his dead chief, he burst into tears; and his sobs alone proclaimed his participation in the solemnity. The vow spread to the surrounding legions; and was echoed, with mingled cries and acclamations, from the furthest ranks.

'My leader, in death as in life!' exclaimed Bruce, clasping his friend's sable shroud to his heart; 'thy pale corse shall again redeem the country which cast thee, living, amongst devouring lions! Its presence shall fight and conquer for thy friend and King!'

Before the chiefs turned to resume their martial stations, the abbot of Inchaffray, drew near with the mysterious iron box, which Douglas had caused to be brought from St. Fillan's priory. On presenting it to the young monarch, he repeated the prohibition which had been given with it; and added, 'Since, then, these canonised relics (for none can doubt they are so,) have found protection under the no less holy arm of St. Fillan; he now delivers them to your youthful majesty, to penetrate their secrets, and to nerve your mind with redoubled trust in the saintly host.'

'The saints are to be honoured, reverend father; and on that principle I shall not invade their mysteries, till the God in whom alone I trust, marks me with more than the name of king; till, by a decisive victory, he establishes me the approved champion of my country; the worthy successor of him, before whose mortal body, and immortal spirit, I now emulate his deeds. But as a memorial, that the host of heaven do indeed lean from their bright abodes, to wish well to this day, let the holy relics repose with those of the brave, till the issue of the battle.'

Bruce, having placed his array, disposed the supernumeraries of his army, the families of his soldiers, and other apparently useless followers of the camp, in the rear of an adjoining hill.

By daybreak, the whole of the Southron army came in view. The van, consisting of archers and men at arms,

displayed the banner of Earl de Warenne; the main body was led on by Edward himself, supported by a train of his most redoubted generals. As they approached, the Bishop of Dunkeld stood on the face of the opposite hill, between the abbots of Cambus-Kenneth and Inchaffray, celebrating mass in the sight of the opposing armies. He passed along in front of the Scottish lines barefoot, with the crucifix in his hand; and in few but forceful words, exhorted them by every sacred hope, to fight with an unreceding step for their rights, their King, and the corse of William Wallace! At this adjuration, which seemed the call of Heaven itself, the Scots fell on their knees, to confirm their resolution with a vow. The sudden humiliation of their posture, excited an instant triumph in the haughty mind of Edward, and spurring forward, he shouted aloud, 'They yield! They cry for mercy!'—'They cry for mercy!' returned Percy, trying to withhold his Majesty, 'but not from us. On that ground, on which they kneel, they will be victorious, or find their graves!'

The King contemned this opinion of the Earl; and inwardly believing that, now Wallace was dead, he need fear no other opponent, (for he knew not that even his cold remains were risen in array against him,) he ordered his men to charge. The horsemen, to the number of thirty thousand, obeyed; and rushing forward, with the hope of overwhelming the Scots ere they could rise from their knees, met a different destiny. They found destruction, amid the trenches, and on the spikes in the way; and with broken ranks, and fearful confusion, fell, or fled under the missive weapons, which poured on them from a neighbouring hill. De Valence was overthrown, and severely wounded; and being carried off the field, filled the rear ranks with dismay; while the King's division was struck with consternation at so disastrous a commencement of an action, in which they had promised themselves an easy victory. Bruce seized the moment of confusion; and seeing his little army distressed by the arrows of the

English, he sent Bothwell round with a resolute body of men, to drive those destroying archers, from the height which they occupied. This was effected; and Bruce coming up with his reserve, the battle in the centre became close, obstinate, and decisive. Many fell before the determined arm of the youthful King; but it was the fortune of Bothwell to encounter the false Monteith, in the train of Edward. The Scottish Earl was then at the head of his intrepid Lanark men: 'Fiend of the most damned treason:' cried he, 'vengeance is come!' and with an iron grasp, throwing the traitor into the midst of the faithful clan; they dragged him to the hearse of their chief; and there, on the skirts of its pall, the wretched villain breathed out his treacherous breath, under the strokes of a hundred swords. 'So,' cried the veteran Ireland, 'perish the murderers of William Wallace!'—'So,' shouted the rest, 'perish the enemies of the bravest, the most loyal of Scots! the benefactor of his country.'

At this crisis, the women and followers of the Scottish camp, hearing such triumphant exclamations from their friends, impatiently quitted their station behind the hill, and ran to the summit, waving their scarfs and plaids in exultation of the supposed victory. The English, mistaking these people for a new army, had not power to recover from the increasing confusion which had seized them on King Edward himself receiving a wound; and, panic-struck with the sight of their generals falling around them, they flung down their arms and fled. The King narrowly escaped; but being mounted on a stout and fleet horse, he put him to the speed, and reached Dunbar: whence the young Earl of March, being as much attached to the cause of England, as his father had been, instantly gave him a passage to England.

The Southron camp, with all its riches, fell into the hands of Bruce. But while his chieftains pursued their gallant chase, he turned his steps from warlike triumph, to pay his heart's honours to the remains of the hero whose

blood had so often bathed Scotland's fields of victory. His vigils were again beneath that sacred pall:—for so long had been the conflict, that night closed in, before the last squadrons left the banks of Bannockburn.

At the dewy hour of morn, Bruce reappeared on the field. His helmet was royally plumed; and the golden lion of Scotland gleamed from under his sable surcoat. Bothwell rode at his side. The troops he had retained from the pursuit, were drawn out in array. In a brief address, he unfolded to them the solemn duty to which he had called them; to see the bosom of their native land receive the remains of Sir William Wallace. 'He gave to you your homes, and your liberty! grant, then, a grave, the peace of the tomb, to him, whom some amongst you repaid with treachery and death!'

On the steps of the altar, the bier rested. The Bishop of Dunkeld, in his pontifical robes, received the sacred deposit, with a cloud of incense; and the pealing organ, answered by the voices of the choristers, breathed the solemn requiem of the dead. The wreathing frankincense parted its vapour, and a wan but beautiful form, clasping an urn to her breast, appeared, stretched on a litter, and was borne towards the spot. It was Helen, brought from the adjoining nunnery; where, since her return to these once dear shores, now made a desert to her, she had languished in the gradual decay of the fragile bonds which alone fettered her mourning spirit, eager for release.

All night had Isabella watched by her couch, expecting that each succeeding breath would be the last her beloved sister would draw in this calamitous world; but, as her tears fell in silence from her cheek, upon the cold forehead of Helen, the gentle saint understood their expression, and looking up; 'My Isabella,' said she, 'fear not.—My Wallace is returned. God will grant me life to clasp his blessed remains!'

Full of this hope, she was borne, almost a passing spirit, into the chancel of Cambus-Kenneth.—Her veil

was open, and discovered her face, like one just awakened from the dead: it was ashy pale; but it bore a celestial brightness; which, like the silver lustre of the moon, declared its approach to the fountain of its glory. Her eye fell on the bier; and, with a momentary strength she sprang from the couch, on which she had leaned in dying feebleness, and threw herself upon the coffin.

There was an awful pause, while Helen seemed to weep. But so, was not her sorrow to be shed. It was locked within the flood-gates of her heart.

In that suspension of the soul, when Bothwell knelt on one side of the bier, and Ruthven bent his knee on the other, Bruce stretched out his hand to the weeping Isabella: 'Come hither, my youthful bride, and let thy first duty be paid to the shrine of thy benefactor, and mine!—So may we live, sweet excellence; and so may we die, if the like may be our meed of heavenly glory!' Isabella threw herself into his arms, and wept aloud. Helen, slowly raising her head at these words, regarded her sister with a look of awful tenderness; then turning her eyes back upon the coffin, gazed on it as if they would have pierced its confines; and clasping the urn earnestly to her heart, she exclaimed, ''Tis come! the promise—*Thy bridal bed, shall be William Wallace's grave.*'

Bruce and Isabella, not aware that she repeated words which Wallace had said to her, turned to her with portentous emotion. She understood the terrified glance of her sister, and with a smile, which spoke her kindred to the soul she was panting to rejoin, she answered, 'I speak of my own espousals. But ere that moment is, and I feel it near—let my Wallace's hallowed presence, bless your nuptials!—Thou wilt breathe thy benediction through my lips!' added she, laying her hand on the coffin, and looking down on it, as if she were conversing with its inhabitant.

'O! no, no!' returned Isabella, throwing herself on her knees before the almost unembodied aspect of her sister:

'Let me ever be the sharer of your cell, or take me with you to the kingdom of heaven!'

'It is thy sister's spirit that speaks,' cried Dunkeld, observing the awe, which not only shook the tender frame of Isabella, but had communicated itself to Bruce; who stood in heart-struck veneration before the yet unascended angel; 'holy inspiration,' continued the bishop, 'beams from her eyes; and as ye hope for further blessings, obey its dictates!'

Isabella bowed her head in acquiescence. As Bruce approached to take his part in the sacred rite, he raised the hand, which lay on the pall to his lips. The ceremony began; was finished!—As the bridal notes resounded from the organ, and the royal pair rose from their knees, Helen held her trembling hands over them.—She gasped for breath; and would have sunk without a word, had not Bothwell supported her shadowy form upon his breast:—she looked round on him, with a grateful though languid smile, and with a strong effort spoke:—'Be you blest in all things, as Wallace would have blessed you!—From his side, I pour out my soul upon you, my sister—my being!—and, with its inward-breathed prayers, to the Giver of all Good, for your eternal happiness, I turn, in holy faith—to my long-looked-for rest!'

Bruce and Isabella wept in each other's arms. Helen slid gently from the bosom of Bothwell, prostrate on the coffin; and uttering, in a low tone, 'I waited only for this!—We have met—I unite thy noble heart to thee again—I claim my brother—at our Father's hands—in mercy!—in love—by his all-blessed Son!'—Her voice gradually faded away, as she murmured these broken sentences, which none but the close and attentive ear of Bothwell heard. But he caught not the triumphant exclamation of her soul; which spoke, though her lips ceased to move, and cried to the attending angels—'Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?'

In this awful moment, the abbot of Inchaffray, believing the dying saint was prostrate in prayer, laid his hand on the iron box, which stood at the foot of Wallace's bier—'Before the sacred remains, of the once champion of Scotland, and in the presence of his royal successor,' exclaimed the abbot, 'let this mysterious coffer of St. Fillan's, be opened; to reward the deliverer of Scotland, according to its intent!' 'If it were to contain the relics of St. Fillan himself,' returned the King, 'they could not meet a holier bosom than this!' and resting the box on the coffin, he unclasped the lock; and the Regalia of Scotland was discovered! At this sight, Bruce exclaimed, in an agony of grateful emotion, 'Thus did this truest of human beings, protect my rights, even while the people I had deserted, and whom he had saved, knelt to him to wear them all.'

'And thus Wallace crowns thee!' said Dunkeld, taking the diadem from its coffer, and setting it on Bruce's head.

'My husband, and my king!' gently exclaimed Isabella, sinking on her knee before him, and clasping his hand to her lips.

'Hearest thou that? my beloved Helen!' cried Bothwell, touching the clasped hands, which rested on the coffin. He turned pale, and looked on Bruce. Bruce, in the glad moment of his joy at this happy consummation of so many years of blood, observed not his glance; but, in exulting accents, exclaimed, 'Look up, my sister; and let thy soul, discoursing with our Wallace, tell him that Scotland is free, and Bruce a king indeed!'

She spoke not, she moved not. Bothwell raised her clay-cold face. 'That soul has fled, my Lord!' said he; 'but from yon eternal sphere, they, now, together, look upon your joys. Here let their bodies rest; for "they loved in their lives, and in their deaths they shall not be divided!" '

Before the renewing of the moon, whose waning light witnessed their solemn obsequies,—the aim of Wallace's

life, the object of Helen's prayers, was accomplished.—Peace reigned in Scotland.—The discomfited King Edward, died of chagrin at Carlisle; and his humbled son and successor, sent to offer such honourable terms of pacification, that Bruce gave them acceptance; and a lasting tranquillity spread prosperity and happiness throughout the land.

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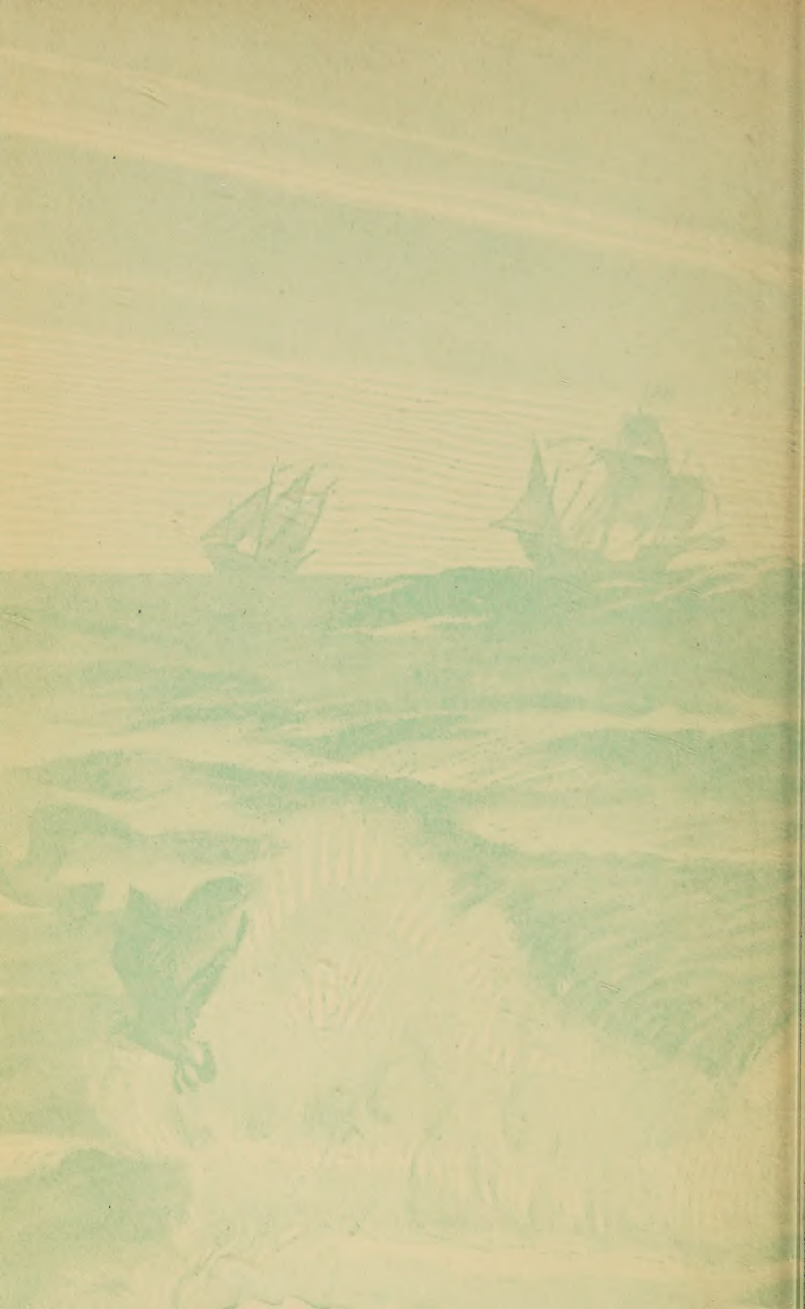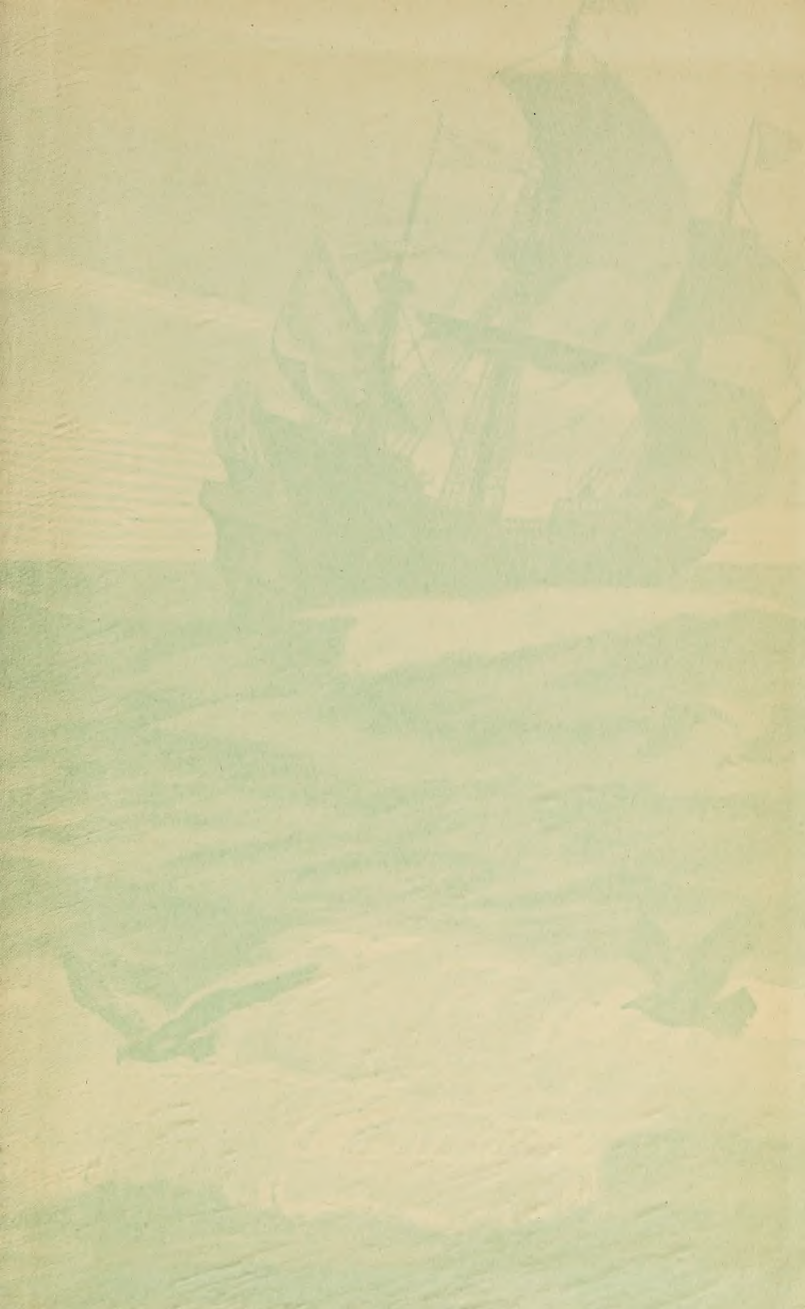
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